

*PRACTICAL  
WISDOM*

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PRACTICAL WISDOM  
*LETTERS TO YOUNG MEN*

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# **Practical Wisdom**

## **Letters to Young Men**

by

**SIR WALTER RALEIGH  
FRANCIS OSBORN  
LORD BURLEIGH  
SIR MATTHEW HALE  
WILLIAM, EARL OF BEDFORD**



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SIR WALTER RALEIGH'S  
INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS SON



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### SIR WALTER RALEIGH'S INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS SON



**V**IRTUOUS PERSONS TO BE MADE  
CHOICE OF FOR FRIENDS.—There  
is nothing more becoming any wise man,  
than to make choice of friends, for by  
them thou shalt be judged what thou art :  
let them therefore be wise and virtuous,  
and none of those that follow thee for gain ;  
but make election rather of thy betters,  
than thy inferiors, shunning always such  
as are poor and needy : for if thou givest  
twenty gifts, and refuse to do the like but  
once, all that thou hast done will be lost,  
and such men will become thy mortal  
enemies. Take also special care, that  
thou never trust any friend or servant,  
with any matter that may endanger thine

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estate; for so shalt thou make thyself a bond-slave to him that thou trustest, and leave thyself always to his mercy: and be sure of this, thou shalt never find a friend in thy young years, whose conditions and qualities will please thee after thou comest to more discretion and judgment, and then all thou givest is lost, and all wherein thou shalt trust such a one, will be discovered. Such therefore as are thy inferiors, will follow thee but to eat thee out, and when thou leavest to feed them, they will hate thee; and such kind of men, if thou preserve thy estate, will always be had. And if thy friends be of better quality than thyself, thou mayest be sure of two things: the first, that they will be more careful to keep thy counsel, because they have more to lose than thou hast: the second, they will esteem thee for thyself, and not for that which thou dost possess. But if thou

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be subject to any great vanity or ill (from which I hope God will bless thee), then therein trust no man; for every man's folly ought to be his greatest secret. And although I persuade thee to associate thyself with thy betters, or at least with thy peers, yet remember always that thou venture not thy estate with any of those great ones that shall attempt unlawful things; for such men labour for themselves, and not for thee; thou shalt be sure to part with them in the danger, but not in the honour; and to venture a sure estate in present, in hope of a better in future, is mere madness: and great men forget such as have done them service, when they have obtained what they would, and will rather hate thee for saying thou hast been a means for their advancement, than acknowledge it.

I could give thee a thousand examples,

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and I myself know it, and have tasted it in all the course of my life; when thou shalt read and observe the stories of all nations, thou shalt find innumerable examples of the like. Let thy love therefore be to the best, so long as they do well; but take heed that thou love God, thy Country, thy Prince, and thine own Estate, before all others: for the fancies of men change, and he that loves to-day, hateth to-morrow; but let reason be thy school-mistress, which shall ever guide thee aright.

GREAT CARE TO BE HAD IN THE CHOOSING OF A WIFE.—The next and greatest care ought to be in the choice of a wife, and the only danger therein, is beauty, by which all men in all ages, wise and foolish, have been betrayed. And though I know it vain to use reasons or arguments to dissuade thee from being captivated therewith, there being few or

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none that ever resisted that witchery, yet I cannot omit to warn thee, as of other things, which may be thy ruin and destruction. For the present time, it is true, that every man prefers his fantasy in that appetite, before all other worldly desires, leaving the care of honour, credit, and safety, in respect thereof. But remember, that though these affections do not last, yet the bond of marriage dureth to the end of thy life. Remember, secondly, that if thou marry for beauty, thou bindest thyself all thy life for that which perchance will neither last nor please thee one year; and when thou hast it, it will be to thee of no price at all; for the desire dieth when it is attained, and the affection perisheth when it is satisfied. Remember, when thou wert a sucking child that then thou didst love thy nurse, and that thou wert fond of her; after a while thou

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didst love thy dry-nurse, and didst forget the other ; after that thou didst also despise her : so will it be with thee in thy liking in elder years ; and therefore, though thou canst not forbear to love, yet forbear to link ; and after a while thou shalt find an alteration in thyself, and see another far more pleasing than the first, second, or third love ; yet I wish thee above all the rest, have a care thou dost not marry an uncomely woman for any respect ; for comeliness in children is riches, if nothing else be left them. And if thou have care for thy races of horses, and other beasts, value the shape and comeliness of thy children, before alliances or riches. Have care therefore of both together, for if thou have a fair wife, and a poor one, if thine own estate be not great, assure thyself that love abideth not with want ; for she is the companion of plenty and honour. This

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Bathsheba taught her son Solomon ; Fav-  
our is deceitful, and beauty is vanity : she  
saith further, That a wise woman overseeth  
the ways of her household, and eateth not  
the bread of idleness.

Have therefore ever more care that thou  
be beloved of thy wife, rather than thyself  
besotted on her ; and thou shalt judge of  
her love by these two observations : first,  
if thou perceive she have a care of thy  
estate, and exercise herself therein ; the  
other, if she study to please thee, and be  
sweet unto thee in conversation, without  
thy instruction ; for love needs no teaching  
nor precept. On the other side, be not  
sour or stern to thy wife, for cruelty  
engendereth no other thing than hatred :  
let her have equal part of thy estate whilst  
thou liveth, if thou find her sparing and  
honest ; but what thou givest after thy  
death, remember that thou givest it to a

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stranger, and most times to an enemy ; for he that shall marry thy wife, will despise thee, thy memory, and thine, and shall possess the quiet of thy labours, the fruit which thou hast planted, enjoy thy love, and spend with joy and ease what thou hast spared, and gotten with care and travail. Yet always remember, that thou leave not thy wife to be a shame unto thee after thou art dead, but that she may live according to thy estate ; especially if thou hast few children, and them provided for. But howsoever it be, or whatsoever thou find, leave thy wife no more than of necessity thou must, but only during her widowhood ; but leave thy estate to thy house and children, in which thou livest upon earth whilst it lasteth. To conclude, Wives were ordained to continue the generation of men, not to transfer them, and diminish them, either in con-

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tinuance or ability; and therefore thy house and estate, which liveth in thy son, and not in thy wife, is to be preferred. Thy best time for marriage will be towards thirty, for as the younger times are unfit, either to choose or to govern a wife and family, so if thou stay long thou shalt hardly see the education of thy children, who being left to strangers, are in effect lost: and better were it to be unborn, than ill-bred; for thereby thy posterity shall either perish, or remain a shame to thy name and family. Bestow therefore thy youth so, that thou mayest have comfort to remember it, when it hath forsaken thee, and not sigh and grieve at the account thereof. Whilst thou are young thou wilt think it will never have an end; but behold, the longest day hath his evening, and that thou shalt enjoy it but once—that it never turns again; use it therefore

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as the spring-time which soon departeth, and wherein thou oughtest to plant, and sow all provisions for a long and happy life.

THE WISEST MEN HAVE BEEN ABUSED BY FLATTERERS.—Take care thou be not made a fool by flatterers, for even the wisest men are abused by these. Know therefore, that flatterers are the worst kind of traitors; for they will strengthen thy imperfections, encourage thee in all evils, correct thee in nothing, but so shadow and paint all thy vices and follies, as thou shalt never, by their will, discern evil from good, or vice from virtue. And because all men are apt to flatter themselves, to entertain the additions of other men's praises, is most perilous. Do not therefore praise thyself, except thou wilt be counted a vain-glorious fool, neither take delight in the praise of other men, except thou deserve

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it, and receive it from such as are worthy and honest, and will withal warn thee of thy faults; for flatterers have never any virtue, they are ever base, creeping, cowardly persons. A flatterer is said to be a beast that biteth smiling; it is said by Isaiah in this manner: ‘My people, they that praise thee, seduce thee, and disorder the paths of thy feet:’ and David desired God to cut out the tongue of a flatterer. But it is hard to know them from friends, they are so obsequious and full of protestations; for as a wolf resembles a dog, so doth a flatterer a friend. A flatterer is compared to an ape, who because she cannot defend the house like a dog, labour as an ox, or bear burdens as a horse, doth therefore yet play tricks and provoke laughter. Thou mayest be sure that he that will in private tell thee thy faults, is thy friend, for he adventures thy dislike,

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and doth hazard thy hatred ; for there are few men that can endure it, every man for the most part delighting in self-praise, which is one of the most universal follies that bewitcheth mankind.

PRIVATE QUARRELS TO BE AVOIDED.—Be careful to avoid public disputations at feasts or at tables among cholerick or quarrelsome persons ; and eschew evermore to be acquainted or familiar with ruffians ; for thou shalt be in as much danger in contending with a brawler in a private quarrel, as in a battle, wherein thou mayest get honour to thyself, and safety to thy prince and country ; but if thou be once engaged, carry thyself bravely, that they may fear thee after. To shun therefore private fight, be well advised in thy words and behaviour, for honour and shame is in the talk, and the tongue of a man causeth him to fall.

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Jest not openly at those that are simple, but remember how much thou art bound to God, who hath made thee wiser. Defame not any woman publicly, though thou know her to be evil; for those that are faulty, cannot endure to be taxed, but will seek to be avenged of thee; and those that are not guilty, cannot endure unjust reproach. And as there is nothing more shameful and dishonest, than to do wrong, so truth itself cutteth his throat that carrieth her publicly in every place. Remember the divine saying, ‘he that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life.’ Do therefore right to all men where it may profit them, and thou shalt thereby get much love; and forbear to speak evil things of men, though it be true (if thou be not constrained) and thereby thou shalt avoid malice and revenge.

Do not accuse any man of any crime, if it be not to save thyself, thy prince, or

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country; for there is nothing more dishonourable, next to treason itself, than to be an accuser. Notwithstanding I would not have thee for any respect lose thy reputation, or endure public disgrace: for better it were not to live, than to live a coward, if the offence proceed not from thyself: if it do, it shall be better to compound it upon good terms, than to hazard thyself; for if thou overcome, thou art under the cruelty of the law, if thou art overcome, thou art dead or dishonoured. If thou therefore contend, or discourse in argument, let it be with wise and sober men, of whom thou must learn by reasoning, and not with ignorant persons; for thou shalt thereby instruct those that will not thank thee, and will utter what they have learned from thee for their own. But if thou know more than other men, utter it when it may do

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thee honour, and not in assemblies of ignorant and common persons.

Speaking much, also, is a sign of vanity ; for he that is lavish in words, is a niggard in deeds ; and as Solomon saith, ‘ The mouth of a wise man is in his heart, the heart of a fool is in his mouth, because what he knoweth or thinketh, he uttereth.’ And by thy words and discourses, men will judge thee. For as Socrates saith, ‘ Such as thy words are, such will thy affections be esteemed ; and such will thy deeds as thy affections, and such thy life as thy deeds.’ Therefore be advised what thou dost discourse of, what thou maintainest ; whether touching religion, state, or vanity ; for if thou err in the first, thou shalt be accounted profane ; if in the second, dangerous ; if in the third, indiscreet and foolish. He that cannot refrain from much speaking, is like a city

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without walls, and less pains in the world a man cannot take, than to hold his tongue; therefore if thou observest this rule in all assemblies, thou shalt seldom err—restrain thy choler, hearken much and speak little; for the tongue is the instrument of the greatest good and greatest evil that is done in the world.

According to Solomon, life and death are in the power of the tongue: and as Euripides truly affirmeth, ‘Every unbridled tongue, in the end, shall find itself unfortunate;’ for in all that ever I observed in the course of worldly things, I ever found that men’s fortunes are oftener made by their tongues than by their virtues, and more men’s fortunes overthrown thereby also, than by their vices. And to conclude, all quarrels, mischief, hatred, and destruction, arise from unadvised speech, and in much speech there are many errors,

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out of which thy enemies shall ever take the most dangerous advantage. And as thou shalt be happy, if thou thyself observe these things, so shalt it be most profitable for thee to avoid their companies that err in that kind; and not to hearken to tale-bearers, to inquisitive persons, and such as busy themselves with other men's estates; that creep into houses as spies, to learn news which concerns them not; for assure thyself such persons are most base and unworthy, and I never knew any of them prosper, or respected amongst worthy or wise men.

Take heed also that thou be not found a liar; for a lying spirit is hateful both to God and man. A liar is commonly a coward, for he dares not avow truth. A liar is trusted of no man, he can have no credit, either in public or private; and if there were no more arguments than this,

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know that our Lord, in St. John, saith, ‘that it is a vice proper to Satan,’ lying being opposite to the nature of God, which consisteth in truth; and the gain of lying is nothing else, but not to be trusted of any, nor to be believed when we say the truth. It is said in the Proverbs, ‘that God hateth false lips; and he that speaketh lies shall perish.’ Thus thou mayst see and find in all the books of God, how odious and contrary to God a liar is; and for the world, believe it, that it never did any man good, except in the extremity of saving life; for a liar is of a base, unworthy, and cowardly spirit.

THREE RULES TO BE OBSERVED FOR THE PRESERVATION OF A MAN’S ESTATE.—Amongst all other things of the world, take care of thy estate, which thou shalt ever preserve, if thou observe three things; first, that thou know what thou hast;

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what every thing is worth that thou hast ; and to see that thou art not wasted by thy servants and officers. The second is, that thou never spend any thing before thou have it ; for borrowing is the canker and death of every man's estate. The third is, that thou suffer not thyself to be wounded for other men's faults, and scourged for other men's offences ; which is, the surety for another ; for thereby millions of men have been beggared and destroyed, paying the reckoning of other men's riot, and the charge of other men's folly and prodigality ; if thou smart, smart for thine own sins, and above all things, be not made an ass to carry the burdens of other men. If any friend desire thee to be his surety, give him a part of what thou hast to spare ; if he press thee farther he is not thy friend at all, for friendship rather chooseth harm to itself, than offer-

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eth it. If thou be bound for a stranger, thou art a fool; if for a merchant thou puttest thy estate to learn to swim; if for a church-man, he hath no inheritance; if for a lawyer, he will find an evasion by a syllable or word, to abuse thee; if for a poor man thou must pay it thyself; if for a rich man he needs not: therefore from suretyship, as from a manslayer or enchanter, bless thyself; for the best profit and return will be this—that if thou force him for whom thou art bound, to pay it himself, he will become thy enemy; if thou use to pay it thyself, thou wilt become a beggar. And believe thy father in this, and print it in thy thought—that what virtue soever thou hast, be it never so manifold, if thou be poor withal, thou and thy qualities shall be despised: besides, poverty is oftentimes sent as a curse of God, it is a shame amongst men, an im-

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prisonment of the mind, a vexation of every worthy spirit; thou shalt neither help thyself nor others; thou shalt drown thee in all thy virtues, having no means to show them; thou shalt be a burden and an eye-sore to thy friends; every man will fear thy company, thou shalt be driven basely to beg, and depend on others, to flatter unworthy men, to make dishonest shifts: and, to conclude, poverty provokes a man to do infamous and detested deeds. Let not vanity, therefore, or persuasion draw thee to that worst of worldly miseries.

If thou be rich, it will give thee pleasure in health, comfort in sickness, keep thy mind and body free, save thee from many perils, relieve thee in thy elder years, relieve the poor and thy honest friends, and give means to thy posterity to live and defend themselves and thine own fame.

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Where it is said in the Proverbs, that ‘he shall be sore vexed that is surety for a stranger, and he that hateth suretyship is sure’: it is farther said, ‘the poor is hated even of his own neighbour, but the rich have many friends.’ Lend not to him that is mightier than thyself, for if thou lendest him, count it but lost. Be not surety above thy power, for if thou be surety think to pay it.

WHAT SORT OF SERVANTS ARE FITTEST TO BE ENTERTAINED.—Let thy servants be such as thou mayest command, and entertain none about thee but yoemen, to whom thou givest wages; for those that will serve thee without thy hire, will cost thee treble as much as they that know thy fare: if thou trust any servant with thy purse, be sure thou take his account ere thou sleep; for if thou put it off, thou wilt then afterwards for tediousness, neg-

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lect it. I myself have thereby lost more than I am worth. And whatever thy servant gaineth thereby, he will never thank thee, but laugh thy simplicity to scorn; and besides, 'tis the way to make thy servants thieves, which else would be honest.

BRAVE RAGS WEAR SOONEST OUT OF FASHION.—Exceed not in the humour of rags and bravery, for these will soon wear out of fashion; but money in thy purse will ever be in fashion; and no man is esteemed for gay garments, but by fools and women.

RICHERS NOT TO BE SOUGHT BY EVIL MEANS.—On the other side, take heed that thou seek not riches basely, nor attain them by evil means; destroy no man for his wealth, nor take any thing from the poor: for the cry and complaint thereof will pierce the heavens. And it is most

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detestable before God, and most dishonourable before worthy men to wrest any thing from the needy and labouring soul. God will never prosper thee in aught, if thou offend therein: but use thy poor neighbours and tenants well, pine not them and their children to add superfluity and needless expenses to thyself. He that hath pity on another man's sorrow, shall be free from it himself; and he that delighteth in, and scorneth the misery of another, shall one time or other fall into it himself. Remember this precept, 'He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and the Lord will recompense him what he hath given.' I do not understand those for poor, which are vagabonds and beggars, but those that labour to live, such as are old and cannot travel, such poor widows and fatherless children as are ordered to be relieved, and the poor tenants

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that travail to pay their rents and are driven to poverty by mischance, and not by riot or careless expenses ; on such have thou compassion, and God will bless thee for it. Make not the hungry soul sorrowful, defer not thy gift to the needy, for if he curse thee in the bitterness of his soul, his prayer shall be heard of him that made him.

WHAT INCONVENIENCES HAPPEN TO SUCH AS DELIGHT IN WINE.—Take especial care that thou delight not in wine, for there never was any man that came to honour or preferment that loved it ; for it transformeth a man into a beast, decayeth health, poisoneth the breath, destroyeth natural heat, brings a man's stomach to an artificial heat, deformeth the face, rot-teth the teeth, and to conclude, maketh a man contemptible, soon old, and despised of all wise and worthy men ; hated in thy

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servants, in thyself and companions ; for it is a bewitching and infectious vice ; and remember my words, that it were better for a man to be subject to any vice than to it ; for all other vanities and sins are recovered, but a drunkard will never shake off the delight of beastliness ; for the longer it possesses a man, the more he will delight in it, and the older he groweth, the more he will be subject to it ; for it dulleth the spirits and destroyeth the body, as ivy doth the old tree ; or as the worm that engendereth in the kernel of the nut.

Take heed therefore that such a cureless canker pass not thy youth, nor such a beastly infection thy old age ; for then shall all thy life be but as the life of a beast, and after thy death, thou shalt only leave a shameful infamy to thy posterity, who shall study to forget that such a one

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was their father. Anacharsis saith, the first draught serveth for health, the second for pleasure, the third for shame, the fourth for madness ; but in youth there is not so much as one draught permitted ; for it putteth fire to fire ; and therefore except thou desire to hasten thine end, take this for a general rule, that thou never add any artificial heat to thy body, by wine or spice, until thou find that time hath decayed thy natural heat, and the sooner thou beginnest to help nature, the sooner she will forsake thee, and trust altogether to art. Who have misfortunes, saith Solomon, who have sorrow and grief, who have trouble without fighting, stripes without cause, and faintness of eyes ? even they that sit at wine, and strain themselves to empty cups. Pliny saith, wine maketh the hand quivering, the eyes watery, the night unquiet, lewd dreams, a stinking

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breath in the morning, and an utter forgetfulness of all things.

Whosoever loveth wine, shall not be trusted of any man, for he cannot keep a secret. Wine maketh man not only a beast, but a madman; and if thou love it, thy own wife, thy children and thy friends will despise thee. In drink, men care not what they say, what offence they give, forget comeliness, commit disorders; and to conclude, offend all virtuous and honest company, and God most of all, to whom we daily pray for health, and a life free from pain; and yet by drunkenness and gluttony (which is the drunkenness of feeding), we draw on, saith Hesiod, a swift, hasty, untimely, cruel, and an infamous old age. And St. Augustine describeth drunkenness in this manner: ‘*Ebrietas est blandus Dæmon, dulce venenum, suave peccatum; quod qui habet*

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seipsum non habet; quod qui facit, peccatum non facit, sed ipse est peccatum.'

'Drunkenness is a flattering devil, a sweet poison, a pleasant sin, which whosoever hath, hath not himself, which whosoever doth commit, doth not commit sin, but he himself is wholly sin.'

Innocentius saith, 'Quid turpius ebrioso, cui foetor in ore, tremor in corpore, qui promit stulta, prodit occulta, cui mens alienatur, facies transformatur? Nullum secretum ubi regnat ebrietas, et quid non aliud designat malum? Fecundi calices quem non fecere disertum?'

'What is filthier than a drunken man, to whom there is stink in the mouth, trembling in the body; which uttereth foolish things, and revealeth secret things; whose mind is alienate and face transformed? There is no secrecy where drunkenness rules; nay, what other mis-

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chief doth it not design? whom have not plentiful cups made eloquent and talking?'

When Diogenes saw a house to be sold, whereof the owner was given to drink, 'I thought at the last,' quoth Diogenes, 'he would vomit a whole house.'

LET GOD BE THY PROTECTOR AND DIRECTOR IN ALL THY ACTIONS.—Now, for the world, I know it too well, to persuade thee to dive into the practices thereof; rather stand upon thine own guard against all that tempt thee thereunto, or may practise upon thee in thy conscience, thy reputation, or thy purse; resolve that no man is wise or safe, but he that is honest.

Serve God, let him be the author of all thy actions, commend all thy endeavours to him that must either wither or prosper them; please him with prayer, lest if he frown, he confound all thy fortunes and

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labours like the drops of rain on the sandy ground : let my experienced advice, and fatherly instructions, sink deep into thy heart. So God direct thee in all his ways, and fill thy heart with his grace.



FRANCIS OSBORN'S ADVICE  
TO A SON



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### FRANCIS OSBORN'S ADVICE TO A SON

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**E**DUCATION. — Though I can never pay enough to your grandfather's memory, for his tender care of my education, yet I must observe in it this mistake; that by keeping me at home, where I was one of my young masters, I lost the advantage of my most docile time. For not undergoing the same discipline, I must needs come short of their experience, that are bred up in free schools; who, by plotting to rob an orchard, etc., run through all the subtleties required in taking of a town; being made, by use, familiar to secrecy and compliance with opportunity; qualities never after to be attained at cheaper rates than the hazard of all: whereas these see the danger of trusting others, and the rocks

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they fall upon, by a too obstinate adhering to their own imprudent resolutions; and all this under no higher penalty than a whipping: and 'tis possible this indulgence of my father might be the cause I afforded him so poor a return for all his cost.

Let not an over-passionate prosecution of learning draw you from making an honest improvement of your estate; as such do, who are better read in the bigness of the whole earth, than that little spot, left them by their friends, for their support.

A mixed education suits employment best: scholars and citizens, by a too long plodding in the same track, have their experience seldom dilated beyond the circle of a narrow profession; of which they carry so apparent marks, as bewray in all places, by their words and gestures, the ped and company they were brought up in; so that all ways of preferment are

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stopped against them, through others' prejudice, or their own natural insufficiency; it being ordinary in their practice to mistake a wilful insolence for a resolute confidence, and pride for gravity; the shortness of the tether their long restraint confined them to, not affording convenient room to take a decent measure of virtue and vice. So by using others as they were dealt with themselves, repute is lost when they come to command; it being justified in history, that slaves after they have forgot all fear of the sword, cannot shake off the terror of the whip. Therefore few not freely educated, can wear decently the habit of a court, or behave themselves in such a mediocrity, as shall not discover too much idolatry towards those in a superior orb, or disdain in relation to such, as fortune rather than merit hath possibly placed below them.

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I have observed in collegiate discipline, that all the reverence to superiors, learned in the hall or chapel, is lost in the irreverent discourse you have of them in your chambers; by this, you leave the principal business of youth neglected, which is, to be perfect in patience and obedience; habits nowhere so exactly learned, as in the foundations of the Jesuits, could they be fetched thence without prejudice to religion or freedom.

If a more profitable employment pull you not too soon from the university, make some inspection into physic; which will add to your welcome wherever you come; it being usual, especially for ladies, to yield no less reverence to their physicians, than their confessors: neither doth the refusal of fees abate your profit proportionably to the advancement it brings to your credit: the intricacy of the study is not

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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great, after an exact knowledge in anatomy and drugs is obtained ; not hard, by reason of the late helps. Yet I advise you this, under such caution, as not to imagine the diseases you read of, inherent in yourself ; as some melancholic young men do, that make their first experiments upon their own bodies, to their perpetual detriment ; therefore you may live by, not upon physic.

Huge volumes, like the ox roasted at Bartholomew Fair, may proclaim plenty of labour and invention, but afford less of what is delicate, savoury and well concocted, than smaller pieces : this makes me think, that though, upon occasion, you may come to the table, and examine the bill of fare, set down by such authors ; yet it cannot but lessen ingenuity, still to fall aboard with them ; human sufficiency being too narrow, to inform with the pure soul of reason, such vast bodies.

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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As the grave hides the faults of physic, no less than mistakes, opinion and contrary applications are known to have enriched the art withal; so many old books, by like advantages rather than desert, have crawled up to an esteem above new: it being the business of better heads perhaps than ever their writers owned, to put a glorious and significant gloss upon the meanest conceit or improbable opinion of antiquity: whereas modern authors are brought by critics to a strict account for the smallest semblance of a mistake. If you consider this seriously, it will learn you more moderation, if not wisdom.

Be conversant in the speeches, declarations, and transactions occasioned by the late war: out of which more natural and useful knowledge may be sucked, than is ordinarily to be found in the mouldy records of antiquity.

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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When I consider with what contradiction reports arrived at us, during our late civil wars, I can give the less encouragement to the reading of history : romances, never acted, being born purer from sophistication than actions reported to be done, by which posterity hereafter, no less than antiquity heretofore, is likely to be led into a false, or at best, but a contingent belief. Cæsar, though in this happy, that he had a pen able to grave into neat language what his sword at first more roughly cut out, may in my judgment, abuse his reader : for he, that for the honour of his own wit, doth make people speak better than can be supposed men so barbarously bred were able, may possibly report they fought worse than really they did. Of a like value are the orations of Thucydides, Livy, Tacitus, and most other historians ; which doth not a little prejudice the truth of all the rest.

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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Were it worthy or capable to receive so much illumination from one never made welcome by it, I should tell the world, as I do you, there is as little reason to believe men know certainly all they write, as to think they write all they imagine : and as this cannot be admitted without danger, so the other, though it may in shame be denied, is altogether as true.

A few books well studied, and thoroughly digested, nourish the understanding more than hundreds but gargled in the mouth, as ordinary students use : and of these choice must be had answerable to the profession you intend : for a statesman, French authors are best, as most fruitful in negotiations and memoirs, left by public ministers and by their secretaries, published after their deaths : out of which you may be able to unfold the riddles of all states : none making more

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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faithful reports of things done in all nations, than ambassadors; who cannot want the best intelligence, because their princes' pensioners unload in their bosoms, all they can discover. And here, by way of prevention, let me inform you, that some of our late ambassadors, which I could name, impaired our affairs, by treating with foreign princes in the language of the place: by which they did not only descend below their master's dignity, but their own discretion: betraying, for want of words of gravity, the intrinsic part of their employment: and going beyond their commission oftener by concession, than confining themselves within it, or to it; the true rule for a minister of state, not hard to be gained by a resolute contest: which if made by an interpreter, he, like a medium, may intercept the shame of any impertinent speech, which eagerness or

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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indiscretion may let slip : neither is it a small advantage to gain so much time for deliberation, which is fit farther to urge : it being besides, too much an honouring of their tongue, and undervaluing your own, to profess yourself a master therein, especially since they scorn to learn yours. And to show this is not grounded on my single judgment, I have often been informed, that the first and wisest Earl of Pembroke, did return an answer to the Spanish ambassador, in Welsh, for which I have heard him highly commended.

It is an aphorism in physic, that unwholesome airs, because perpetually sucked into the lungs, do distemper health more than coarser diet, used but at set times : the like may be said of company, which if good, is a better refiner of the spirits, than ordinary books.

Propose not them for patterns, who

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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make all places rattle, where they come, with Latin and Greek; for the more you seem to have borrowed from books, the poorer you proclaim your natural parts, which only can properly be called yours.

Follow not the tedious practice of such as seek wisdom only in learning; not attainable but by experience and natural parts. Much reading, like a too great repletion, stopping up, through a concourse of diverse, sometimes contrary opinions, the access of a nearer, newer, and quicker invention of your own. And for quotations, they resemble sugar in wine, marring the natural taste of the liquor, if it be good; if bad, that of itself: such patches rather making the rent seem greater, by an interruption of the style, than less, if not so neatly applied as to fall in without drawing: nor is any thief in this kind

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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sufferable, who comes not off, like a Lacedemonian, without discovery.

The way to elegancy of style, is to employ your pen upon every errand ; and the more trivial and dry it is, the more brains must be allowed for sauce : thus by checking all ordinary invention, your reason will attain to such a habit, as not to dare to present you but with what is excellent ; and if void of affection, it matters not how mean the subject is : there being the same exactness observed, by good architects, in the structure of the kitchen, as the parlour.

When business or compliment calls you to write letters, consider what is fit to be said, were the party present, and set down that.

Avoid words or phrases likely to be learned in base company ; lest you fall into the error the late Archbishop Laud

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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did ; who though no ill speaker, yet blunted his repute by saying in the Star Chamber, men entered the church as a tinker and his bitch do an alehouse.

The small reckoning I have seen made, especially in their lifetime, of excellent wits, bids me advise you, that if you find any delight in writing, to go on : but, in hope to please or satisfy others, I would not black the end of a quill : for long experience hath taught me, that builders always, and writers for the most part, spend their money and time in the purchase of reproof and censure from envious contemporaries, or self-conceited posterity.

Be not frequent in poetry, how excellent soever your vein is, but make it rather your recreation, than business : because though it swells you in your own opinion, it may render you less in that of wiser

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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men, who are not ignorant, how great a mass of vanity, for the most part, coucheth under this quality, proclaiming their heads like ships, of use only for pleasure, and so richer in trimming than lading.

It is incident to many, but as it were natural with poets, to think others take the like pleasure in hearing, as they do in reading their own inventions. Not considering, that the generality of ears are commonly stopped with prejudice of ignorance: neither can the understandings of men, any more than their tastes, be wooed to find a like savour in all things; one approving what others condemn, upon no weightier an account than the single score of their own opinions. Yet some, like infirm people, make it the chief part of their entertainment, to show strangers their gouty lines; in which they do not seldom become more unhappy than those

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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really diseased, who by such boldness do sometimes hear of a remedy.

The art of music is so unable to refund for the time and cost required to be perfect therein, as I cannot think it worth any serious endeavour: the owner of that quality being still obliged to the trouble of calculating the difference between the morose humour of a rigid refuser, and the cheap and prostituted levity and forwardness of a mercenary fiddler. Denial being as often taken for pride, as a too ready compliance falls under the notion of ostentation: those so qualified seldom knowing when it is time to begin, or give over; especially women, who do not rarely decline in modesty, proportionably to the progress they make in music.

Wear your clothes neat, exceeding rather than coming short of others of like fortune; a charge borne out by acceptance

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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wherever you come ; therefore spare all other ways rather than prove defective in this.

Never buy but with ready money ; and be drawn rather to fix where you find things cheap and good, than for friendship or acquaintance, who are apt to take it unkindly, if you will not be cheated. For if you get nothing else by going from one shop to another, you shall gain experience.

Next to clothes, a good horse becomes a gentleman : in whom can be no great loss, after you have got the skill to choose him ; which once attained, you may keep yourself from being cozened, and pleasure your friend : the greatest danger is haste : I never loved to fix on one fat, for then I saw him at the best, without hope of improvement : if you have fallen on a bargain not for your turn, make the market your chapman, rather than a friend.

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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Gallop not through a town, for fear of hurting yourself or others ; besides the indecency of it, which may give cause to such as see you, to think your horse or brains none of your own.

Wrestling and vaulting have ever been looked upon by me as more useful than fencing, being often out-dared by resolution, because of the vast difference between a foyn and a sword, a house and a field.

Swimming may save a man, in case of necessity ; though it loseth many, when practised in wantonness, by increasing their confidence ; therefore, for pleasure exceed not your depth ; and in seeking to save another, beware of drowning yourself.

Though Machiavel sets down hunting and hawking in the bill of advice he prescribes to a prince, as not only the wholesomest and cheapest diversions, both in relation to himself and his people, but the

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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best tutors to horsemanship, stratagems and situations on which he may have after occasion to place an army. Yet these are so much under the disposition of chance, the most delightful part being wholly managed according to the sense of the creature, that by such cross accidents, as do not seldom intervene, storms of choler are often raised, in which many humours flash out, that in a greater serenity prudence would undoubtedly conceal: so as I could name some reputed owners of a habit of policy, more ruffled, and farther put out of their bias, by a small rub lying in the way of their pleasure, than a greater could cause in that of their profit. And as sinister events in these pastimes deject a man below the ordinary level of discretion, so a happy success doth as often wind him up to such a jovial pin, that he becomes a familiar companion to those

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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who can inform his judgment in little, but what signifies nothing, and whom in a more reserved temper he would think it tedious to hear, yet cannot after shake off their acquaintance, without incurring the censure of pride or inconstancy. Neither am I led to this opinion by any particular disaffection, but out of the greater reverence I bear to the wisdom of Sir Philip Sidney, who said, that next hunting he liked hawking worst. However though he may have fallen into as hyperbolical an extreme, yet who can put too great a scorn upon their folly that to bring home a rascal deer, or a few rotten coneys, submit their lives to the will or passion of such as may take them, under a penalty no less slight than there is discretion shown in exposing them.

Such as are betrayed by their easy nature, to be ordinary security for their

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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friends, leave so little to themselves, as their liberty remains ever after arbitrary at the will of others. Experience having recorded many, whom their fathers had left elbow room enough, that by suretyship have expired in a dungeon. But if you cannot avoid this labyrinth, enter no farther than the thread of your own stock will reach; the observation of which will, at worst, enable you to bail yourself.

Let not the titles of consanguinity betray you into a prejudicial trust; no blood being apter to raise a fever or cause a consumption sooner in your poor estate, than that which is nearest your own; as I have most unhappily found, and your good grandfather presaged, though God was pleased to leave it in none of our powers to prevent: nothing being truer in all Solomon's observations, than that a good friend is nearer than an unnatural brother.

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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He that lends upon public faith is security for his own money, and can blame none more than himself, if never paid; common debts, like common lands, lying ever most neglected.

Honesty treats with the world upon such vast disadvantage, that a pen is often as useful to defend you as a sword, by making writing the witness of your contracts; for where profit appears, it doth commonly cancel the bands of friendship, religion, and the memory of anything that can produce no other register than what is verbal.

In a case of importance, hear the reasons of others pleaded, but be sure not to be so implicitly led by their judgments, as to neglect a greater of your own, as Charles of England did, to the loss of his crown; for as the ordinary saying is, Count money after your father, so the same prudence

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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adviseeth to measure the ends of all counsels, though uttered by never so intimate a friend.

Beware, nevertheless, of thinking yourself wiser or greater than you are. Pride brake the angels in heaven, and spoils all heads we find cracked here; for such as observe those in Bedlam, shall perceive their fancies to beat most upon mistakes in honour or love. The way to avoid it is, duly to consider how many are above you in parts, yet below you in condition; and that all men are ignorant in so many things, as may justly humble them, though sufficiently knowing to bar out despair.

Shun pride and baseness as tutors to contempt, the first of others, the latter of yourself, a haughty carriage putting as well a mean esteem on what is praiseworthy in you, as an high excise on that appears amiss, every one being more in-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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quisitive after the blemishes than the beauties of a proud person; whereas the humble soul passeth the strictest guards with more faults, like the fair-mouthed traveller, without scorn or searching.

Though it be common with the King of Heaven to punish the wicked and reward the good, yet we find him said to resist no vice but pride, nor exalt other virtue than humility, that being the only sin we read of ever brake into his court unwashed by forgiveness, where she became the first precedent of God's lessening his family, and the foundress of hell. Nor are his vicegerents upon earth more auspicious to a lofty look, for any affection they do naturally bear to it or its owners, though sometimes they dissemble their dislike, out of the use they make of such good parts as have the ill-fortune to be so accompanied, this vice being taken as in-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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trusion upon majesty, the only birthright of princes. Therefore, dear son, let not the apprehension of your merit lead you up to this pinnacle, from whence many have fallen to their utter ruin—nothing you find about you being your own, but scraps stolen from books, and begged, or rather dearly bought, of experience: this proves the vanity of pride, that though she is able to boast of no more than she hath received (the hive being possibly altered, but not the honey), yet she is ravished so with the conceit of what she hath, a contemplation befitting only the Lord of all things, as to neglect a supply of what is wanting, which, justly summed up, amounts to more than the abilities of any one man are able to reach.

When you speak to any, especially of quality, look them full in the face; other gestures bewraying want of breeding, con-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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fidence, or honesty, dejected eyes confessing, to most judgments, guilt or folly.

Impudence is no virtue, yet able to beggar them all, being for the most part in good plight when the rest starve, and capable of carrying her followers up to the highest preferments: found as useful in a court as armour in a camp.

I do not find you guilty of covetousness, neither can I say more of it, but that like a candle ill made, it smothers the splendour of an happy fortune in its own grease.

Yet live so frugally, if possible, as to reserve something that may enable you to grapple with any future contingency; and provide in youth, since fortune hath this proper with other common mistresses, that she deserts age, especially in the company of want.

'Tis generally said of the fox, that he supplants the badger, and nestles himself

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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in his den. What may be pure nature in him, wise Seneca adviseth for the highest prudence—rather to purchase a house ready built, than endure the tedious and troublesome expectation and charge attending the most diligent and able contriver, who cannot find so much pleasure in seeing his ideas brought into form, as he shall meet discontent from the mistakes of his commands, greatness of the expense, and idleness of the workmen, who, the better to draw men into this labyrinth, make things appear more cheap and easy than any undertaker of such a task ever yet found, knowing, if once engaged, the spurs of shame and necessity will drive him on; when the buyer may take or leave, having a world to choose in, and the choicest conveniences at another's cost, without participating of their disgrace for such faults as curiosity may find,

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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and he himself might have fallen into had he been operator, since nothing was ever yet so exactly contrived, but better information, or a new discovery of a more commodious fashion or situation did arraign of defect—which altogether proves it the best advice, rather to endure the absurdities of others gratis, than to be at the cost to commit greater yourself.

Keep no more servants than you have full employment for; and if you find a good one, look upon him under no severer aspect than that of an humble friend, the difference between such an one and his master residing rather in fortune than in nature. Therefore, do not put the worst constructions upon anything he doth well, or mistakes. Thus, by proportioning your carriage to those below, you will the better bring your mind to a safe and easy deportment to such as fate hath set above

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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you. To conclude, servants are ever sharers with their masters in prosperity, and not seldom an occasion of their destruction in bad times, by fomenting jealousy from without, or treachery within.

Leave your bed upon the first desertion of sleep; it being ill for the eyes to read lying, and worse for the mind to be idle: since the head during that laziness is commonly a cage for unclean thoughts.

It is nowhere wholesome to eat so long as you are able; especially in England, where meat, aptest to inveigle the stomach to an over-repletion, comes last. But in case you transgress at one meal, let no persuasion tempt you to a second repast, till by a fierce hunger you find yourself quite discharged of the former excess. An exact observance of this hath, under God, made me reach these times, and may through his mercy preserve you for better.

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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Drink, during the operation of the distemper, will act all the humours habitual in madmen ; amongst both which I have seen some very zealous and devout, who, the fit once over, remained no less profane. This proves godliness capable of being feigned, and may raise an use of circumspection, in relation to such as profess more than is suitable to human frailty.

Beware what company you keep, since example prevails more than precept, though by the erudition dropping from these tutors, we imbibe all the tinctures of virtue and vice : this renders it little less than impossible for nature to hold out any long siege against the batteries of custom and opportunity.

Let your wit rather serve you for a buckler to defend yourself, by a handsome reply, than the sword to wound others, though with never so facetious a reproach,

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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remembering that a word cuts deeper than a sharper weapon, and the wound it makes is longer in curing; a blow proceeding but from a light motion of the hand agitated by passion, whereas a disgraceful speech is the result of a low and base esteem settled of the party in your heart.

Much wisdom resides in the proverbs of all nations; and therefore fit to be taken notice of; of which number this is common amongst us, play with me, but hurt me not, it being past peradventure, that more duels arise from jest than earnest, and between friends than enemies; serious injuries seldom happening but upon premeditation, which affords reason some, though perhaps no full audience; whereas this extemporary spirit conjured up by shame and smart, hearkens to nothing but the rash advice of a present revenge.

If an injury be of so rank a nature, as

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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to extort, in point of honour, an unsavoury word, never suitable to the mouth of a gentleman, sword-men advise, to second it with a blow by way of prevention, lest he striking first, which cannot but be expected, you should be cast behind-hand. But this their decree not being confirmed by act of Parliament, I cannot find it suitable with prudence or religion, to make the sword umpire of your own life and another's, no less than the law, upon no more serious an occasion, than the vindication of your fame, lost or gained, by this brutish valour, in the opinion of none that are either wise or pious ; it being out of the reach of question, that a quarrel is not to be screwed up to such a height of indiscretion, without arraigning one or both parties of madness : especially since formal duels are but a late invention of the devil's, never heard of in relation to pri-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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vate injuries; among the Romans the gladiators fighting for their pleasure, as the Horatii and Curatii for the safety of the people. It cannot be denied, but that story lays before us many killed for private revenge, but never accompanied with so ridiculous a formality as the sending of challenges, which renders the dead a greater murderer than he is that kills him, as being without doubt the author of his own death. This makes me altogether believe, that such wild manhood had its original from romances, in which the giant is designed for death and the knight to marry the lady, whose honour he hath preserved; not so gently treated by the English law, where if his legs or friends be not the better, he is hanged and his estate confiscated, to the perpetual detriment of his family: besides the sting of conscience, and a natural fear, like that of Cain's, at-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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tending blood, by which the remainder of life is made tedious and miserable to such unfortunate men, who seem in all honest company to smell too strong of blood, to be taken into any intimate relation.

Prosecute not a coward too far, lest you make him turn valiant to your disadvantage; it being impossible for any standing even in the world's opinion, to gain glory by the most he can have of those that lie under such a repute; besides, valour is rather the product of custom, than nature, and often found where least expected; do not therefore waken it to your prejudice, as I have known many that would still be insulting, and could not see when they were well.

Speak disgracefully of none at ordinaries, or public meetings; lest some kinsman, or friend, being there, should force you to a base recantation, or engage you in a more indiscreet quarrel: this renders

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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all free discourse dangerous at meetings or mixed companies.

Reveal not the pranks of another's love, how serious or ridiculous soever you find them, it being unlikely the mirth should compensate the danger: by this you shall purchase yourself a retentive faculty, and sell your friend a stronger confidence of your secrecy; hanging on him the lock of a perpetual obligation, of which you may ever be keeper of the key, either out of love or fear: yet many other faults are not more dangerous to commit, than know without detecting.

Be not trumpet of your own charity, or vices; for by the one you disoblige the receiver, as well as lose your reward; and by the other, you alarm the censures of men; most being condemned through the evidence they give against themselves by their words and gestures.

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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TRAVEL.—Some to starch a more serious face upon wanton, impertinent, and dear-bought vanity, cry up travel as the best accomplisher of youth and gentry, though detected by experience in the generality, for the greatest debaucher ; adding affectation to folly, and atheism to the curiosity of many not well principled by education : such wanderers imitating those factors of Solomon, that together with gold, returned apes and peacocks.

They, and only they, advantage themselves by travel, who, well fraught with the experience of what their own country affords, carry over with them large and thriving talents, as those servants did, commended by our Saviour : for he that hath nothing to venture but poor, despicable, and solitary parts, may be so far from improvement, as he hazards quite to lose and bury them in the external levity of

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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France, pride of Spain, and treachery of Italy ; because not being able to take acquaintance abroad of more prudence, than he meets with in the streets and other public places, the activity of his legs and arms may possibly be augmented, and he, by tedious compliments, become more acceptable in the eyes of silly women, but useless, if not pernicious, to the government of his own country, in creating doubts and dislikes by way of a partial comparison.

Yet since it advanceth opinion in the world, without which desert is useful to none but itself (scholars and travellers being cried up for the highest graduates in the most universal judgments), I am not much unwilling to give way to peregrine motion for a time ; provided it be in company of an ambassador, or person of quality ; by whose power the danger may be

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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rebated, no less than your charge of diet defrayed; inconsiderable in such a retinue as persons of their magnitude are forced to entertain.

Or if your genius, tempted by profit, incline to the life of a merchant, you have the law of nations, and articles of a reciprocal amity, to protect you from other inconveniences, than such as indiscretion draws upon rash and unadvised strangers.

Now if it be your fortune, on any such like accounts to leave your native country, take these directions from a father, wearied, and therefore possibly made wiser, by experience.

Let not the irreligion of any place breed in you a neglect of divine duties; remembering God heard the prayers of Daniel in Babylon, with the same attention he gave to David in Sion.

Shun all disputes, but concerning re-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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ligion especially ; because that which commands in chief, though false and erroneous, will, like a cock on his own dunghill, line her arguments with force, and drive the stranger out of the pit with insignificant clamours. All opinions, not made natural by complexion, or imperious education, being equally ridiculous to those of contrary tenets.

Though it may suit no less with your years, than mine that advise you, to follow such fashions in apparel, as are in use as well at home as abroad, those being least gazed on that go as most men do ; yet it cannot be justified before the face of discretion, or the charity due to your own countrymen, to esteem no doublet well made, nor glove worth wearing, that hath not passed the hands of a French tailor, or retains not the scent of a Spanish perfumer. A vanity found incident to Eng-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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land, and the people our ordinary account reckons east of us ; a strong presumption, the last arrived within the pale of civility, else they would be more confident of their own inventions, had they not still fresh in memory, from whence they derived the arts of building, clothing, behaviour, etc. A fancy, though foolish, yet easier excused, did it not ascend to the more rare and useful endowments of the mind, so far as to put a miraculous estimation upon the writings of strangers, and a base alloy on better of their own.

So he that beyond sea frequents his own countrymen, forgets the principal part of his errand, language ; and possibly the opportunity to get experience how to manage his expense ; frugality being of none so perfectly learned, as of the Italian and Scot ; natural to the first, and as necessary to the latter. The English also are ob-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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served abroad more quarrelsome with their own nation than strangers, and therefore marked out as the most dangerous companions.

An injury in foreign air is cheaper passed over than revenged, the endeavour of which hath, not seldom, drawn on a greater.

Play is destructive and fatal to estates everywhere, but to the persons of gamers abroad, rendering them the objects of cheating and quarrels; all bystanders being apt to attest to the prejudice of a stranger.

Where you never mean to return, extend your liberality at the first coming, as you see convenient, during your abodes; for what you give at parting is quite lost.

Make no ostentation of carrying any considerable sum of money about you; lest you turn that to your destruction,

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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which under God is a stranger's best preservation: and remove not from place to place, but with company you know: the not observing whereof is the cause of so many of our countrymen's graves never being known, having been buried in as much obscurity as killed.

Inns are dangerous, and so are all fresh acquaintance, especially where you find their offer of friendship to outbid a stranger's desert: the same may be said of servants; not to be entertained upon ordinary commendations.

Next to experience, languages are the richest lading of a traveller; among which French is most useful, Italian and Spanish not being so fruitful in learning (except for the mathematics and romances), their other books being mutilated by the Fathers of the Inquisition.

GOVERNMENT.—Contract not the com-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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mon distemper, incident to vulgar brains, who still imagine more ease from some untried government, than that they lie under; not having passed the first form of experience, where we may learn, that tyranny is natural to power.

If happy for the present, it is no better than madness to endeavour a change; if but indifferently well, folly: for though a vessel may yield the more for tilting or stirring, it renders all in it unpleasant to the present use: the die of war seldom turning to their advantage, that first cast it; such therefore as cannot make all well, discharge their conscience in wishing it so; government being the care of providence, not mine. But if it be your fortune to fall under such commotions, imitate not the wild Irish or Welsh, who during the eclipses, run about beating kettles and pans, thinking their clamour and

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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vexations available to the assistance of the higher orbs, though they advance nothing but their own miseries, being often maimed, but at best laid by, without respect or reward, so soon as the state is returned to its former splendour : common soldiers resembling cocks, that fight for the benefit and ambition of others, more than their own : this proves it the wholesomer counsel, to stay within doors, and avoid such malignant effects, as people attribute to the supposed distempers of the superior planets. But if forced to take a stream, let it be that which leads to the desires of the metropolis, the chief city being for the most part preserved, who ever prevails in a civil commotion, abounding in money and friends, the readiest commodities to purchase quiet.

Be not the pen or mouth of a multitude congregated by the jingling of their fetters ;

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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lest a pardon or a compliance knock them off, and leave you, as the soul of that deformed body, hanging in the hell of the law, or to the vengeance of an exasperated power; but rather have patience and see the tree sufficiently shaken, before you run to scramble for the fruit; lest instead of profit and honour, you meet with a cudgel or a stone; and then, if possible, seem to fall in rather out of compulsion, than design; since the zeal of the rabble is not so soon heated by the real oppressions of their rulers, but may be easily cooled by the specious promises and breath of authority. Wherefore nurse not ambition with your own blood, nor think the wind of honour strong enough to blow away the reproachful sense of a shameful, if possibly that of a violent death; for if Solomon's rule be true, that a living dog is better than a dead lion, a quick evasion

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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cannot but be deemed more man-like than a buried valour.

A multitude inflamed under a religious pretence, are at first as unsafely opposed, as joined with; resembling bears exasperated by the cry of their whelps, and do not seldom, if unextinguished by hope or delays, consume all before them, to the very thing they intend to preserve: zeal, like the rod of Moses, devouring all for diabolical, that dares but appear before it in the same shape: the inconsiderate rabble, with the swine in the gospel, being more furiously agitated by the discontented spirits of others, than their own; who cannot be so happy in a sea of blood and devastation, the dire effects of war, as in peace, though invaded with some oppression; a scab that breaks out oftentimes in the most wholesome constituted bodies of states, and may with less smart be con-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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tinued on, than picked off. And because the generality are incapable, in regard of number, either of reward, or punishment, therefore not of use to the ambition or safety of others, but for the present, like gun-powder during the flash of their discontent, and as a lock in a river, are only of force upon the first opening to drive on the design of innovation; losing themselves afterwards in a more universal dilatation, either out of weariness, or doubt of the consequence.

The example of Brutus, rather than Cato, is to be followed in bad times; it being safer to be patient, than active; or appear a fool, than a malcontent; an evasion not only justified in the person of David, and by the eloquence of Paul before his heathen judges, but our Saviour Himself is not heard to inveigh against the present power, though it made the

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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head of the Baptist the frolic to a feast.

Own the power, but not the fault of the magistrate: nor make law, assigned for a buckler to defend yourself, a sword to hurt others; lest partiality should allure you to pass the sentence of approbation upon any thing unwarrantable in its own nature. Neither let any formalities used at a mimical tribunal (as that was, set up in the case of Naboth) persuade you to more than a passive compliance: since such may seem to make greater, rather than diminish the wages of their iniquity, that seek to cover rapine with a gown; which the sword might patronise with more decency: and this observed, the people might cheaper receive all their injury at the first hand, which these retailers of wickedness utter at more intolerable rates: the result of all is, Ahab might better have committed murder single, than

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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render so many accessory, under the formal pretence of a religious fast, etc.

Before you fix, consult all the objections discretion is able to make ; but once resolved desert not your party upon access of a fever, as many melancholy spirits did these wars ; who, by their often and unseasonable flittings, wore themselves so out on both sides, as they were not worth owning, when success undertook for them, that they did turn in earnest : irresolution rendering pardon more difficult from either faction, than it could have proved, had they remained constant to any : divesting themselves of the ensigns of fidelity, looked upon by all with the eyes of pity, and which often meet with honour, seldom fail of forgiveness, from a noble enemy, who cannot but befriend virtue, though he hath found it in arms against him. Yet if you perceive the post you have con-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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tracted, to totter, through undermining treachery or weakness, you may purchase your preservation by all honest endeavors ; for he that prolongs his life by the forfeiture of a trust he has undertaken, husbands it worse than if he buried it in the field of honour, traitors in all ages being equally detested on both sides.

Think it no disparagement to your birth or discretion to give honour to fresh families, who cannot be denied to have ascended by the same steps those did we style ancient, new being a term only respecting us, not the world ; for what is was before us, and will be when we are no more : war follows peace, and peace war, as summer doth winter, and foul weather fair : neither are any ground more in this mill of vicissitudes, than such obstinate fools as glory in the repute of state-martyrs after they are dead, which concerns

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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them less than what was said one hundred years before they were born, it being the greatest odds their names shall not be registered, or if they be, after death, they are no more sensible of the honour, than Alexander's great horse, or any beast else, his master's indulgence or the writer's are pleased to record. Neither, in a strict sense, do they deserve such honour for being able to date their possessions from before the Conquest, since, if any be due, it wholly belongs to them that were buried in the ruins of their country's liberty, and not to such as helped to make their graves, as in all likelihood most did whom the Normans suffered to remain. Therefore, it is madness to place our felicity out of our own reach, or to measure honour or repute by any other standard than the opinion we conceive of it ourselves, it being impossible to find a general agree-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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ment in any good or evil report, the reign of Queen Elizabeth being no less traduced, than that of Richard the Third is justified.

Be not, therefore, liquorish after fame, found by experience to carry a trumpet, that doth for the most part congregate more enemies than friends.

If you duly consider the inconstancy of common applause, and how many have had their fame broken upon the same wheel that raised it, and puffed out by their breath that kindled the first report of it, you would be as little elevated with the smiles as dejected by the frowns of this gaudy goddess, formed, like Venus, out of no more solid matter than the foam of the people, found by experience to have poisoned more than ever she cured; being so volatile, as she is unable of fixation in the richest jewels of nature, virtue, or grace; the composition of that body wholly con-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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sisting of contradictions, no readier to set up this day, than she may be to pull down the next : this renders it the lowest puerility to be pleased or angry at reports, good being inflamed, and evil quenched, by nothing sooner than a constant neglect.

Despise none for meanness of blood, yet do not ordinarily make them your companions, for debasing your own, unless you find them clarified by excellent parts, or gilded by fortune or power—Solomon having sent the sluggard to the ant to learn industry, and to the living dog rather than the dead lion for protection.

Grant, if ever, a courtesy at first asking, for as expedition doubles a benefit, so delay converts it into little less than an injury, and robs you of the thanks ; the fate of churlish natures ; whereas some I have known able to apparel their refusals in such soft robes of courtship, that it was

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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not easy to be discerned whether the request or denial were most decent.

Do not hackney out your promise to the full stage of desire, lest, tiring in performance, and becoming a bankrupt in power, you forfeit repute, and purchase certain enemies for uncertain friends. Yet when the suffrages of many, in relation to your particular profit, are to be purchased, wise men's practice hath proved it no indiscretion to be lavish in this kind; where the dishonour of non-performance with others is quite buried in the greater benefit accruing to yourself, it being as ordinary for hope to exceed modesty in asking, as an engaged power comes short of the ability, if not the will, to perform: therefore, in this case, you must supply with thanks what you are not able to do in effect.

Be not nice in assisting, with the advantages nature or art may have given you,

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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such as want them, who do not seldom in exchange part with those of fortune to such as can manage their advice well, as they only do that never give counsel till called, nor continue it longer than they find it acceptable.

If one in power ask your advice in a business of consequence, it may appear rashness, if not folly, to answer suddenly upon the place, it not being impossible but that the design of his question may as well be to try your sufficiency, as to strengthen his own. However, so much time as may be borrowed with safety from the emergency of any occasion, is likelier to increase than abate the weight of a result, and in this interim you may gain leisure to discover what resolution suits best the mind of the party, who is commonly gratified most by such as comply nearest with his own judgment, which it

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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is ever wisdom to observe, where all the counsels given are indifferent. Nor will it savour of so much respect to his person, or care of his affairs, to determine extempore, as upon premeditation, it being the custom of great ones to value things, not proportionable to their worth, but the sweat and time they cost.

It is not safe for a secretary to mend the copy his master hath set him, unless owned as from his former inspirations, lest he should grow jealous that you valued your conceptions before his, who measures his sufficiency by the altitude of his employment, not the depths of his natural parts. This made the Lord Chancellor Egerton the willinger to exchange incomparable Doctor D. for the less sufficient, though in this more modest, Mr. T. B.

But in case his affairs be wholly left to your management, you must not only look

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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to correspond for his miscarriages, but as obstinately renounce any honour that may be given you to his prejudice, imputing all to his single sufficiency, yourself owning no higher place than that of the executioner of his commands; for though many great men, like properties or puppets, are managed by their servants, yet such are most dear to them, as can so carry their hand in their actings, that they make them appear less fools than in truth they are—easily done, by giving them the honour to concede or deny in public, without interposing any other arguments against it than may become the mouth of a servant, however you may order him in private.

Court him always you hope one day to make use of, but at the least expense you can, observing the condition of men in power, to esteem better of such as they have done courtesies for, than those they have

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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received greater from, looking upon this as a shame, upon the other as an honour.

Though I hope I have now reason to be confident you will accomplish the presage, divers long since made of your future sufficiency ; yet I should advise not to extend it to any public demonstration beyond the limits of your own profession—since the study of the law being esteemed by all a full employment for a whole man, if you should make a considerable digression into another calling, it might occasion a jealousy in your clients you had neglected your own. The several books incomparable Bacon was known to read, besides those relating to the law, were objected to him as an argument of his insufficiency to manage the place of solicitor-general, and may lie as a rub in all their ways that shall, out of vain glory to manifest a general knowledge, neglect this caution.

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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Avoid in your pleadings such unnecessary digressions as some of the long-robe do ordinarily make from the merit of the cause to the defamation of the contrary party; a quicksand wherein Coke, that leviathan of the law, mired his repute: nor could he divest this vanity after he was made a judge: from which height it cast him to the hazard of his neck, had not the soft nature of King James broke his fall. Nor doth the antiquity of it plead a better excuse, than that he retained the effeminate and weaker part, leaving the Roman elegancy unimitated.

At a conference, to speak last is no small advantage, as Mr. John Hampden wisely observed, who made himself still the goal-keeper of his party, giving his opposite leisure to lose their reasons in the loud and less significant tempest, commonly arising upon a first debate; in

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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which, if he found his side worsted, he had the dexterous sagacity to mount the argument above the heads of the major part, whose single reason did not seldom make the whole parliament so far suspicious of their own, as to approve his, or at least give time for another debate, by which he had the opportunity to muster up more forces; thus, by confounding the weaker, and tiring out the acuter judgments, he seldom failed to attain his ends.

If you be to vote in any public assembly, avoid as much as you may, giving concession under your hand to any private man's written opinions; for you cannot, without experiment, believe how much your own judgment will be altered, and how crude your former reasons will appear to yourself, after they are ruminated and digested by debate.

Having since these wars been admitted

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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to councils, where many of no great capacity have assisted, I never knew any thing come so exactly framed out of one man's sense, that did not receive a palpable amendment from the debates of sometimes much inferior judgments. Nay, I have known some that have had the fortune to start the idea, which, when it hath been presented to them again in a perfect result, have not been able to see the bottom of the wisdom of it, without much difficulty and admiration: neither is this miraculous, but natural; for the fuller, dyer, weaver, etc., understand not each other's trades, yet between them all a good piece of cloth is made.

Before I came to have leisure to observe them, I thought princes and ministers of state something above human—not hearing a word fall from them upon which I did not put a politic construction; but

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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growing more familiar with them, I found their discourses mingled with the same follies ours are, and their domestical affairs carried on with as little, if not less discretion sometimes than ordinary men's.

He that seeks perfection on earth leaves nothing new for the saints to find in heaven ; for whilst men teach, there will be mistakes in divinity ; and as long as no other govern, errors in the state : therefore be not liquorish after change, lest you muddy your present felicity with a future greater, and more sharp inconvenience.

RELIGION.—Read the book of God with reverence, and in things doubtful take fixation from the authority of the church, which cannot be arraigned of a damnable error, without questioning that truth, which hath proclaimed her proof against the gates of hell. This makes me

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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wish that our Samsons in success, who have stripped her of her ornaments (riches, powers and honours, which the ancient piety left her to cover her nakedness withal), and given them to vain expounders of riddles, may not one day have cause to repent, when they find themselves annoyed, no less than the eyes of truth put out by the dust and rubbish the fall of so great and antique a frame is likely to make. Therefore be content to see your judgment wade rather than swim in the sense or the scriptures, because our deep plungers have been observed to bring up sandy assertions, and their heads wrapt about with the venomous weeds of error and schism, which may for the present discountenance the endeavours of modester learning, yet will, no doubt, sink and vanish, after some time and experience had of their frequent mistakes, as those of our

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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bold expositors of the Revelation have most shamefully done.

Despise not a profession of holiness, because it may be true; but have a care how you trust it, for fear it should be false: the coat of Christ being more in fashion than in practice, many pulpit-men, like physicians, forbidding their patients that you may ordinarily find on their own trenchers.

I can approve of none for magisterial divinity, but that which is found floating in the unquestioned sense of the scriptures; therefore, when cast upon a place that seems equally inclined to different opinions, I would advise to count it as bowlers do for dead to the present understanding, and not to torture the text by measuring every nicety, but rather turn to one more plain, referring to that all disputes, without knocking one hard place against another,

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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as they have done since this iron age, till an unquenchable fire of contention is kindled, and so many jarring and uncertain sounds of religion heard, as men stand amazed, not knowing which to follow—all pretending to be in the right, as if it were possible for truth to contradict herself.

And yet it was no unhappy rencontre in him that said, ‘a good religion might be composed out of the Papists’ “charity,” the Puritans’ “words,” and the Protestants’ “faith.”’ For where works are thought too chargeable, outward profession too cumbersome, the third renders itself suspected; the two first being only palpable to sense and reason, stand firm like a rock; whereas the other shakes under the weight of every fancy, as Peter did when he walked upon the sea: to speak English, in good works none can be deceived but the doer, in valuing them too high; in the

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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two latter, all but God, who only knows the heart.

Religions do not naturally differ so much in themselves, as fiery and uncharitable men pretend, who do not seldom persecute those of their own creed, because they profess it in other terms. Then do not only ask thy conscience what is truth? but give her full leisure to resolve thee; for he that goes out of the way with her consent, is likelier to find rest, than he that plods on without taking her directions.

Therefore do nothing against the counsel of this guide, though she is observed in the world to render her owners obnoxious to the injury and deceit of all that converse without her; nothing being more hard and chargeable to keep than a good conscience.

Let no seeming opportunity prevail so far upon your curiosity, as to entice you

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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to an inspection into your future fortune, since such inquisitiveness was never answered with good success; the world, like a lottery, affording multitudes of crosses for one prize, which reduced all into a sum, must, by a necessary consequence, render the remainder of life tedious, in removing present felicities, to make room for the contemplations of future miseries.

Do not pre-engage hope or fear by a tedious expectation, which may lessen the pleasure of the first, yet cannot but aggravate the weight of the latter, whose arrival is commonly with a less train of inconveniences, than this harbinger strives to take up room for; evil fortune being no less inconstant than good: therefore render not thyself giddy, by poring on despair, nor wanton with the contemplation of hope.

Stamp not the impress of a divine ven-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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geance upon the death or misfortunes of others, though never so prodigious, for fear of penning a satire against yourself, in case you should fall under the same chance: many things being taken up as dropped out of an immediate celestial hand, that fell from no higher pitch than where God in his providence hath placed such events, as wait upon all times and occasions, which prayers and prudence are not able always to shroud you from; since upon a strict inquiry, it may appear, that in relation to this world, the godly have as little cause to brag, as the wicked to complain.

CONCLUSION.—Bear always a filial reverence to your dear mother, and let not her old age, if she attain it, seem tedious unto you; since the little she may keep from you, will be abundantly recompensed, not only by the prayers, and by the tender

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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care she hath, and ever will have of you ; therefore in case of my death (which weariness of this world will not suffer me to adjourn, so much as by a wish), do not proportion your respect by the mode of other sons, but to the greatness of her desert, beyond requital in relation to us both.

Continue in love and amity with your sister, and in case of need, help her what you are able ; remembering, you are of a piece, and hers and yours differ but in name ; which I presume, upon want of issue, will not be denied to be imposed on any child of hers, you shall desire to take for your own.

Let no time expunge his memory that gave you the first tincture of erudition ; to which he was more invited by love than profit, no less than his incomparable wife : therefore if God make able, requite them,

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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and in the meanwhile register their names among those you stand most obliged to.

What you leave at your death, let it be without controversy ; else the lawyers will be your heirs.

Be not solicitous after pomp at my burial, nor use any expensive funeral ceremony ; by which mourners, like crows, devour the living under pretence of honouring a dead carcase : neither can I apprehend a tombstone to add so great a weight of glory to the dead, as it doth of charge and trouble to the living ; none being so impertinent wasters, in my opinion, as those that build houses for the dead : he that lies under the hearse of heaven is convertible into sweet herbs and flowers, that may rest in such bosoms, as would shriek at the ugly bugs, that may possibly be found crawling in the magnificent tomb of Henry the Seventh ; which

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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also hinders the variety of such contingent resurrections as unarched bodies enjoy, without giving interruption to that, which He that will not again die, hath promised to such as love Him and expect His appearing. Besides, that man were better forgotten, who hath nothing of greater moment to register his name by than a grave.

Neither can I apprehend such horror in death, as some do that render their lives miserable to avoid it, meeting it oftentimes by the same way they take to shun it. Death, if he may be guessed at by his elder brother sleep (born before he was thought on, and fell upon Adam ere he fell from his Maker), cannot be so terrible a messenger, being not without much ease, if not some voluptuousness. Besides nothing in this world is worth coming from the house-top to fetch it, much

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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less from the deep grave; furnished with all things, because empty of desires.

And concerning a future account, I find the bill to swell rather than shrink, by continuance; or if a stronger propensity to religion resides in age, than youth (which I wish I had no cause to doubt of), it relates more to the temperature of the body, than an improvement of the mind; and so unworthy of any other reward, than what is due to the effects of human infirmities.

To conclude, let us serve God with what reverence we are able, and do all the good we can, making as little unnecessary work for repentance as is possible: and the mercy of our heavenly Father supply all our defects in the Son of his love. Amen.



LORD BURLEIGH'S ADVICES  
TO HIS SON



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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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### LORD BURLEIGH'S ADVICES TO HIS SON



**S**ON ROBERT,—The virtuous inclinations of thy matchless mother, by whose tender and godly care thy infancy was governed, together with thy education under so zealous and excellent a tutor, put me in rather assurance than hope, that thou art not ignorant of that ‘*summum bonum*,’ which is only able to make thee happy as well in thy death as in thy life ; I mean, the true knowledge and worship of thy Creator and Redeemer ; without which, all other things are vain and miserable. So that thy youth being guided by so sufficient a teacher, I make no doubt that he will furnish thy life with divine and moral documents. Yet, that I may not cast off the care beseeeming a parent towards his child ;

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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or that thou shouldst have cause to derive thy whole felicity and welfare rather from others than from whence thou receivedst thy breath and being; I think it fit and agreeable to the affection I bear thee, to help thee with such rules and advertisements for the squaring of thy life, as are rather gained by experience than by much reading. To the end, that entering into this exorbitant age, thou mayest be the better prepared to shun those scandalous courses whereunto the world, and the lack of experience, may easily draw thee. And because I will not confound thy memory, I have reduced them into ten precepts; and, next unto Moses' Tables, if thou imprint them in thy mind, thou shalt reap the benefit, and I the content. And they are these following:—

I. When it shall please God to bring thee to man's estate, use great providence

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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and circumspection in choosing thy wife : for from thence will spring all thy future good or evil. And it is an action of thy life, like unto a stratagem of war : wherein a man can err but once. If thy estate be good, match near home and at leisure ; if weak, far off and quickly. Enquire diligently of her disposition, and how her parents have been inclined in their youth. Let her not be poor, how well-born soever ; for a man can buy nothing in the market with gentility. Nor choose a base and uncomely creature altogether for wealth ; for it will cause contempt in others and loathing in thee. Neither make choice of a dwarf or a fool ; for thou shalt find it to thy great grief, that there is nothing more fulsome than a she-fool.

And touching the guiding of thy house, let thy hospitality be moderate ; and, according to the means of thy estate, rather

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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plentiful than sparing, but not costly. For I never knew any man grow poor by keeping an orderly table. But some consume themselves through secret vices, and their hospitality bears the blame. But banish swinish drunkards out of thine house, which is a vice impairing health, consuming much, and makes no show. I never heard praise ascribed to the drunkard, but the well-bearing his drink ; which is a better commendation for a brewer's horse or a drayman, than for either a gentleman, or a serving-man. Beware thou spend not above three of four parts of thy revenues ; nor above a third part of that in thy house. For the other two parts will do no more than defray thy extraordinary, which always surmount the ordinary by much : otherwise thou shalt live, like a rich beggar, in continual want. And the needy man can never live happily nor

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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contentedly ; for every disaster makes him ready to mortgage or sell. And that gentleman who sells an acre of land, sells an ounce of credit. For gentility is nothing else but ancient riches. So that if the foundation shall at any time sink, the building must needs follow. So much for the first precept.

II. Bring thy children up in learning and obedience, yet without outward austerity. Praise them openly, reprehend them secretly. Give them good countenance, and convenient maintenance according to thy ability ; otherwise thy life will seem their bondage, and what portion thou shalt leave them at thy death, they will thank death for it, and not thee. And I am persuaded that the foolish cockerings of some parents, and the overstern carriage of others, causeth more men and women to take ill courses, than their own vicious

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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inclinations. Marry thy daughters in time, lest they marry themselves. And suffer not thy sons to pass the Alps, for they shall learn nothing there but pride, blasphemy, and atheism. And if by travel they get a few broken languages, that shall profit them nothing more than to have one meat served in divers dishes. Neither, by my consent, shalt thou train them up in wars; for he that sets up his rest to live by that profession, can hardly be an honest man, or a good Christian. Besides it is a science no longer in request than use. For soldiers in peace, are like chimneys in summer.

III. Live not in the country without corn and cattle about thee. For he that putteth his hand to the purse for every expense of household is like him that keepeth water in a sieve. And what provision thou shalt want, learn to buy it at the best

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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hand. For there is one penny saved in four, betwixt buying in thy need, and when the markets and seasons serve fittest for it. Be not served with kinsmen, or friends, or men entreated to stay; for they expect much, and do little; nor with such as are amorous, for their heads are intoxicated. And keep rather two too few, than one too many. Feed them well, and pay them the most; and then thou mayest boldly require service at their hands.

IV. Let thy kindred and allies be welcome to thy house and table. Grace them with thy countenance, and farther them in all honest actions. For by this means, thou shalt so double the band of nature, as thou shalt find them so many advocates to plead an apology for thee behind thy back. But shake off those glow-worms, I mean parasites and sycophants, who will feed and fawn upon thee in the summer of

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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prosperity ; but, in an adverse storm, they will shelter thee no more than an harbour in winter.

V. Beware of suretyship for thy best friends. He that payeth another man's debt, seeketh his own decay. But if thou canst not otherwise choose, rather lend thy money thyself upon good bonds, although thou borrow it. So shalt thou secure thyself, and pleasure thy friend. Neither borrow money of a neighbour or a friend, but of a stranger ; where, paying for it, thou shalt hear no more of it. Otherwise thou shalt eclipse thy credit, lose thy freedom, and yet pay as dear as to another. But in borrowing of money, be precious of thy word ; for he that hath care of keeping days of payment, is lord of another man's purse.

VI. Undertake no suit against a poor man, even with receiving much wrong : for besides that thou makest him thy

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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compeer, it is a base conquest to triumph where there is small resistance. Neither attempt law against any man, before thou be fully resolved that thou hast right on thy side and then spare not for either money or pains. For a cause or two so followed and obtained, will free thee from suits a great part of thy life.

VII. Be sure to keep some great man thy friend, but trouble him not for trifles. Compliment him often with many, yet small gifts, and of little charge. And if thou hast cause to bestow any great gratuity, let it be something which may be daily in sight. Otherwise, in this ambitious age, thou shalt remain like a hop without a pole, live in obscurity, and be made a football for every insulting companion to spurn at.

VIII. Towards thy superiors be humble, yet generous. With thine equals,

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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familiar, yet respective. Towards thine inferiors show much humanity and some familiarity; as to bow the body, stretch forth the hand, and to uncover the head, with such like popular compliments. The first prepares thy way to advancement. The second makes thee known for a man well bred. The third gains a good report; which, once got, is easily kept. For right humanity takes such deep root in the minds of the multitude, as they are more easily gained by unprofitable courtesies than by churlish benefits. Yet I advise thee not to affect or neglect popularity too much. Seek not to be Essex: shun to be Raleigh.

IX. Trust not any man with thy life, credit, or estate. For it is mere folly for a man to enthrall himself to his friend, as though, occasion being offered, he should not dare to become an enemy.

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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X. Be not scurrilous in conversation, nor satirical in thy jests. The one will make thee unwelcome to all company; the other pull on quarrels, and get thee hated of thy best friends. For suspicious jests, when any of them savour of truth, leave a bitterness in the minds of those which are touched. And, albeit I have already pointed at this inclusively; yet I think it necessary to leave it to thee as a special caution; because I have seen many so prone to quip and gird, as they would rather lose their friend than their jest. And if perchance their boiling brain yield a quaint scoff, they will travail to be delivered of it as a woman with child. These nimble fancies are but the froth of wit.



SIR MATTHEW HALE'S AD-  
VICE TO HIS GRAND-  
CHILDREN



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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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### SIR MATTHEW HALE'S AD- VICE TO HIS GRAND- CHILDREN



**C**ONCERNING COMPANY, AND  
THE CHOICE OF IT.—There is a  
certain magic or charm in company, for it  
will assimilate, and make you like to them,  
by much conversation with them; if they  
be good company, it is a great means to  
make you good, or confirm you in good-  
ness; but if they be bad, it is twenty to  
one but they will infect and corrupt you.  
And therefore you must have a special  
care in the choice of your company, es-  
pecially when you come abroad in the  
world, to Oxford, or the Inns of Court;  
for you must know that when a young  
gentleman or gentlewoman, especially if

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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he or she have an estate or fortune, comes abroad in the world, especially to the Inns of Court, or Oxford, there are a sort of beasts of prey that lie in wait for them, as wolves and foxes lie in wait for young lambs, namely, a sort of necessitous and indigent sharks, gamesters, drinkers, and debauched persons; and these will attack you under forty disguises, if you be not aware of them, and will confound you; and therefore I must needs again and again give you warning hereof: for these are a sort of harpies and ravens, that pursue your very life, or at least your estates and reputations, and yet many times under pretence of love and kindness.

First.—Therefore be very wary and shy in choosing, and entertaining, or frequenting any company or companions; be not too hasty in committing yourself to them: stand off awhile till you have in-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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quired of some that you know by experience to be faithful, what they are ; observe what company they keep ; be not too easy to gain acquaintance, but stand off and keep a distance yet awhile, till you have observed and learnt touching them. Men or women that are greedy of acquaintance, or hasty in it, are oftentimes snared in ill company before they are aware, and entangled so that they cannot easily get loose from it after when they would.

When you are sent to Oxford, you will be put under a tutor that is able to advise you. The first thing I shall do with you, if I live to send you to the Inns of Court, is to inquire and find out some person with whose acquaintance I dare trust you ; a man of discretion, fidelity, and prudence. Before you entertain any new acquaintance in the university, advise with your

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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tutor, whether he thinks him fit for you, and the like you are to do with that person that I shall commend you to, when you come to the Inns of Court. For they having more experience, and more opportunity to satisfy themselves therein, than you can have, will be able better to advise you in the choice of your company than you can yourselves.

Secondly.—Do not choose for your friends and familiar acquaintance those that are of an estate or quality too much above yours. The inconveniences thereof are these. You will hereby accustom yourselves to live after their rate in clothes, in habit, and in expenses, whereby you will learn a fashion and rank of life above your degree and estate, which will in the end be your undoing. Or, if you live not up to their rate of clothes, diet, or expense, you shall be despised both by them

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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and others ; so that which way soever you take, you shall be a fool, or be esteemed so by all that observe you. Therefore give all persons of higher rank or greater estate than yourselves all due respect ; but make not choice of such for your intimate acquaintance, or daily companions.

Thirdly.—On the other side, consort not with beggary, base or necessitous companions ; for these will be both to your discredit and disprofit ; for it is a thousand to one but they will make a prey of you. It is true, they will flatter you, and give you goodly titles (esquire at the least) ; they will set you up at the upper end of the table ; but the design all the while is to shark upon you, to make you pay their reckonings, and supply their wants. Indeed you shall be honoured by them, in outward appearance, as the best man in the company, but you must pay

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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for it, or in a little time they will despise you. It is a lamentable sight to see how young gentlemen, when they come to an university, or inns of court, lose themselves when they are listed companions with stage-players, tapsters, ostlers, fiddlers, common gamesters, threadbare poets, serving-men, and such like. But if a man be ingenuous, sober, virtuous, learned, it is no disparagement to have such a companion, though he be of a mean rank, or estate, or degree; for you will receive benefit, and no discredit, by such a person's conversation and acquaintance.

Fourthly.—By all means avoid the company of quarrelsome or choleric persons, Hectors, and those that they call swordsmen; for if you keep company with such persons, it is a thousand to one but you shall be quarrelled with by them, or engaged in their quarrels with others.

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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It is their business to make their companions like themselves, and to instruct them in the methods of quarrelling. I have very often seen young gentlemen, by being only in the company of such persons, have been miserably entangled thereby. If a person be killed or hurt by them, or by their means, all that are in the company, though possibly innocent of the fact itself, yet are liable to be questioned, and sometimes for their lives, for being in company where such disorders are committed; and it is scarce possible for you to be free from the danger of the law, if you are in company of those that commit them; for most assuredly you will be necessarily engaged in the quarrel, and so your lives may come in danger by the quarrel itself, or by the law, that spares no man that is a party in such a fact; yea, though you are innocent of the fact itself, yet being

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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in that company that committed it, you can neither avoid the suspicion of being a partner in it, but you must be put upon your trial to clear yourself. These are the common and necessary inconveniences of such company; and the only way to avoid these and the like inconveniences, is wholly to avoid such company.

Fifthly.—And what I have said concerning your quarrelsome company, I say concerning intemperate drinkers, or debauched companions: you must avoid them, as you will avoid the company of him that is infected with the plague, and the reasons of it are these that follow. It is a thousand to one but they will corrupt you into the same quality and ill condition with themselves: there is a kind of magic or witchcraft in evil company, that makes others like themselves. They will use all the tricks and artifices imaginable to make

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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you drink to excess, or debauch you, and when they have once got but one such advantage upon you, you are for ever their slave (without a miracle of divine providence and grace to deliver you from them), for they are masters of your credit, and if you at any time after refuse to consort with them, they will publish to your friends, to your relations, to your enemies, to the world, in what a condition you were once in their company. And the very fear of having your vices published by them will make you their slaves, and engage you to hold pace with them in many disorders. When men are disordered with wine, or other liquor, they put themselves out of God's protection, and are laid open to the management of the devil; they lose the conduct of their own reason, and are more ungovernable than brute beasts; no villainy comes amiss, but they are qualified

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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to commit it. The places of judicature which I have long held in this kingdom, have given me opportunity to observe the original cause of most of the enormities that have been committed for the space of near twenty years ; and by a due observation I have found, that if the murders and manslaughters, the burglaries and robberies, the riots and tumults, the adulteries, fornications, rapes, and other great enormities, that have happened in that time, were divided into five parts, four of them have been the issues and product of excessive drinking at taverns, or alehouse meetings. Therefore, if you meet any person given to excess of drinking, if he invite you to go to a tavern or alehouse, or any such house of disorder, or if he begin to set you, or any else, into a posture of drinking, remember that your grandfather tells you such a person is not for

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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your company; you must avoid him and his company, for he is laying a snare for you, to betray you into all kinds of villainy, to bereave you of your reputation, your estate, your innocence, to withdraw you from your duty to God, to put you out of his blessing and protection, to make you a perpetual slave, to expose you to all kind of enormities and mischiefs, and solicits you to unman yourself, and put you into a baser rank of beings than the very brutes themselves. If you yield to such solicitations, it is a thousand to one but you are undone.

But if you have that resolution and courage to deny them at first, and to decline such companions and solicitations, these vermin and pests will give you over, as not for their purpose; and if they do persist in it, yet such a resolute denial by you against their company and practices,

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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will enable you with more and more courage and success to reject them thereafter, and to make their attempts to pervert you insignificant and ineffectual.

Sixthly.—Avoid that company that you find or observe are given to profane swearing or cursing, to blaspheme God, or the Holy Scriptures; that choose to make demonstration of their wit, by making jests of the Scripture phrases or passages, by deriding of religion or religious persons. This is a pitiful, sordid indication or employment of wit. Commonly such persons, whatever they pretend to, are indeed bold and confident enough, but yet of narrow, unfurnished understandings, and are the rankest fools in the world.

Seventhly.—But make choice of those for your companions and confidants, that are sober, prudent, frugal, pious, and learned; such men's discourse, conversa-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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tion, and example, will habituate you to virtue, wisdom, and goodness, as much and oftentimes much more than a man's own reading and observation. Such a conversation makes your time as profitably spent in their company as at your book, and will confirm and establish you in ways of piety and virtue.

I have observed among young men, that possibly are not vicious nor given to any ill course, the kinds of choice of company. Some affect such company as are younger than themselves, and are such as have less learning, prudence, or understanding, than they themselves have; and this they do, not so much to inform and better them, for then it is a worthy design, but out of a natural desire to be the best, and the wisest, and the learnedest in the company they choose, and to overmatch any of them therein. But this is, though a harm-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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less, yet an imprudent choice of company ; for such a man shall never advance much in knowledge, wisdom, or goodness, that converseth only with such as are no proficients therein. There be that choose such for their companions, that are equals in age, and parts, or education, to them ; and this is a much better choice than the former ; because natural emulation in equals many times advanceth learning and wisdom, and goodness, especially if there be a wise inspector and superintendent to all the company ; and besides, equality of age and education seems a common natural invitation to consortship and acquaintance, and therefore it is by no means wholly to be condemned, but rather much to be cherished, if they are no otherwise than good and virtuous. Again, there be others that neither disdain the company of inferiors either in age or parts, nor decline

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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conversation with their equals, and do yet choose a more intimate acquaintance and assiduity of conversation with those that are more ripe than themselves in learning, in age, in experience, in wisdom, prudence, piety, and virtue.

And certainly there is a great advantage to young gentlemen and gentlewomen in this kind of choice; because it gives them many greater advantages, both by instruction and example, than the other choices; and the advances of virtue and goodness are attained hereby with greater security and stability, and with greater and readier opportunities.

And therefore, where the companies are innocent and good, though I would not have you despise the conversation of your inferiors, nor neglect the conversation of your equals in age and proficiency, yet I do advise you to make that your most

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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eligible company that exceed you in age, learning, and experience, and choose out of that number a person for your principal confidant, and intimate acquaintance, still taking care that he be a sober, pious, and virtuous man.

Eighthly.—You must take notice that there is a great difference to be made between these three—namely, an acquaintance, a companion, an intimate friend. For I may choose such a man for my acquaintance, which yet I would not choose to make my ordinary companion; and such a man for my ordinary companion, which yet I would not make my choice and intimate friend; so that such a friendship is of a narrower consideration than an ordinary companion, and such a companion is of a narrower consideration than an acquaintance. Therefore, although I would not have you too hasty in being

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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acquainted, nor yet to multiply your acquaintance too much, for that may be troublesome, chargeable, and inconvenient to you ; and although in the choice of your acquaintance, I would have you avoid all such kind of persons as I have before in this chapter warned you to forbear, yet I cannot advise you better, especially when you come to some ripeness of age, than to propound to you that course, which I knew an excellent person to observe, who, though he made choice of few ordinary companions, and fewer intimate friends, yet did single out some for acquaintance, that might be useful to him in all the concerns and instances of his life : he selected such or such a person for his physician or apothecary ; such or such a person for his lawyer or attorney : such a person for advice or assistance in building, surveying, planting, husbandry and the like ; and in

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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this used a great deal of prudence in his choice; and as any occasions offered themselves, so he applied severally to those men for their assistance, and was not to seek for advice or assistance upon any such emergency: and of these, as he made his choice with great consideration and prudence, so he rarely changed those he had thus chosen for their assistance upon variety of occasions. And this may be convenient to be done by any man of estate and business in the world.

CONCERNING YOUR CARRIAGE TO YOUR INFERIORS, SUPERIORS, AND EQUALS.—Before I shall fall to particulars, I shall spend a few words in general, touching your carriage to all men.

First.—You must know, that there is no person that lives, but may, at some time or other, have occasion to make use of another's help and assistance or kind-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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ness ; and there is not the meanest person in the world, but one time or other may have an opportunity of doing you a kindness or assistance.

Secondly.—You must know there is no person in the world, though seemingly never so vile an object, but one time or other may have power or opportunity to do you a mischief, or procure you some notable inconvenience : these are truths that are most certain, though too little thought upon or minded by most men ; therefore it will be your wisdom to keep a common fair carriage to all people of all ranks, and to make to yourself as few enemies as you can ; still remembering this saying of mine, that there is not the meanest person in the world, but once in your lifetime you may some way or other stand in need of his help, or that one time or other may have power and opportunity

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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to do you a mischief; and therefore it will be your wisdom to oblige as many as you can, without detriment to yourself, and to disoblige none without great necessity. Esop's fables, though they seem but light and trivial, yet many of them contain excellent morals; I shall mention two to this purpose.

A little ant being fallen into the water, and like to be drowned, a pigeon flying by, and observing the ant's extremity, let fall a little branch into the water to relieve the ant, upon which she got, and so saved herself and got to the land. A short time after, a fowler aimed to shoot the pigeon: the little ant being near at hand, and remembering the kindness the pigeon had showed her, and observing the design of the fowler, bit him by the foot, whereby the fowler lost his aim and the pigeon escaped.

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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Again he tells us, that a lion sleeping in the forest, a little mouse running up and down awakened and so angered the lion, that the lion in a rage clapped his paw upon the mouse, intending to have crushed him : the fable tells us the mouse entreated the lion to spare him ; for, said he, if thou kill me, it is but an inglorious act for a lion to kill a mouse, but if thou spare me, it is possible it may be to thy advantage ; the lion thereupon let him go. Shortly after the lion was taken in a net that the hunters laid for him, and could by no means extricate himself ; but the mouse passing by, and remembering the former kindness of the lion, bit asunder the threads of the net, and so delivered the lion.

The fables show us these few observables : that many times small and inconsiderable instruments may procure great

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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benefits to a person far above them ; and that an easy and cheap kindness may sit so close to the memory and mind of another, that it may procure from an inconsiderable instrument such a benefit as far exceeds such a kindness.

Therefore I would have you constantly observe these general rules :

First.—Never provoke the most inconsiderable person in the world unnecessarily, or where you can possibly avoid it ; for thereby you make an enemy which may have an opportunity to revenge himself, and to do you a great displeasure.

Secondly.—And therefore use no contumelious words or language unnecessarily of any man, nor any reproachful, slighting, or despising carriage towards him, neither deal injuriously with him : remember the old proverb, ‘ a dog will have a day.’

Thirdly.—Oblige as many as you can

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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have occasion to converse withal, with such kindness as may well stand with your condition to bear or perform. There is a sort of kindness that does not cost a man much to do, which yet hath a great influence upon the affections of men, and a man shall be certainly a gainer and not a loser in doing them : as for instance, the putting off the hat to an inferior ; kind words to him, or of him ; forgiving and passing by some small trespass ; lending a small matter to a man that wants, nay, sometimes bestowing it freely ; relieving a stranger or necessitous person with an alms ; and a hundred such small kindnesses may be performed without any damage to him that doth them, and yet many times it procures a return of far greater advantage. I do not mean those rank kindnesses that unreasonable men will expect, as to become bound for a man, or to lend

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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or give him more than a man is able ; for as touching such I shall give you a caution hereafter ; but I speak of those ordinary, easy, familiar kindnesses and respects, which may be performed without any considerable damage to yourself.

And in showing of these kindnesses, I would have you perform them cheerfully and readily, and they will oblige the more. It is a true saying of old Sir Francis Bacon, that for the most part, men are more taken with unprofitable courtesies than with churlish benefits.

Fourthly.—There is no one thing in the world that doth make a man more enemies, or doth disoblige more, than a proud and haughty carriage ; it is a thing that gives a general distaste to all mankind, and to all dispositions ; to poor and to rich, to great and to small, to them that are humble, and to them that are proud as

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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they ; and as it makes a man many enemies, so it gives his enemies a great advantage against him, it makes a man ridiculous, and exposeth a man not only to hazard, but also to contempt and scorn.

On the other hand, a decent yet humble deportment, especially in a man of worth, place, and estate, makes almost every man his friend ; but certainly it makes no man his enemy.

Therefore in all your deportment and carriage, avoid pride, haughtiness, arrogance, contempt of others ; and let your carriage be gentle, courteous, and with a decent and becoming humility to all men.

It is true, the demonstration of humility is not of one and the same standard or measure unto persons of differing qualities ; namely, to superiors and inferiors. A man of a truly humble spirit and humble carriage is not bound to show the same ex-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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ternal tokens of respect to a beggar as to a prince ; to a servant, as to his master : but still there must be a real humility, and perfect avoiding of pride in every instance ; though the external demonstration of that humility may, and must be varied, according to the variety of the condition of the person whom it concerns. I stand bare in the presence-chamber of the king ; but I do not so in the presence-chamber of a lord. I stand bare to a great man, I put off my hat only to an equal, but I do neither to one that begs an alms of me ; yet I may in all use the same humility of mind, and also of deportment, though under a different ceremony and external gesture. Custom hath made a difference, and so may an humble man, and yet still be the same humble man in all those differing external postures, and as free from pride, not only in his mind but also in his

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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carriage, when he talks with a beggar, as with a prince.

And you must take this always along with you as a great truth, that pride, or haughtiness of mind or carriage, is not only displeasing to men, but displeasing to the great God of heaven and earth. I do not in my remembrance find any expression in the Holy Scriptures, declaring so much indignation of the glorious God against any one sin, as against pride. ‘Surely he scorneth the scorners, but he giveth grace unto the lowly’: which text is rendered by St. James and by St. Peter, ‘God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.’ The God of heaven sets himself against the proud, to abase and bring them down. A proud man hath the great God of heaven and earth for his enemy and opposer: and no man, no prince, no angel, can bear up against his

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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opposition, which will most certainly overmatch him. The short of all this general direction is this: I would have you have but few intimate familiar friends in whom you repose, especially, trust and confidence; but yet have as many friends at large as you can, and as few enemies, and order your conversation accordingly.

Now as to the particular directions. And first, in relation to your inferiors.

Avoid in an especial manner all contentions, as much as you can, with inferiors; rather forgive and pass by a small injury than use any revenge, even by court of law or otherwise; for if you prevail, you shall gain little by your victory where there is little to make recompense; and you shall be counted an oppressor, or at best, a very hard and cruel man; but if you be worsted, it will cast a very great contempt upon you, to be overmatched by

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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your inferior. But if the case be of such a nature that you are in a manner enforced to repair yourself against an injury committed by your inferior (or indeed by any person); observe that you make not yourself your own judge or avenger, but complain to the civil magistrate. When you have gotten the better upon such a complaint, do not prosecute an inferior to the utmost extremity, but take a reasonable satisfaction; or if he be very poor, forgive it altogether: you have this great advantage by it, that by how much the more it was in your power to use your advantage upon him, by so much the more your mercy and goodness in forgiving him will appear and oblige him to you, and not only make him cautious of injuring you for the future, but also the more ready to serve you in all offices of kindness. Overmuch familiarity will make them

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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contemn and despise you, and on the other side too much superciliousness and strangeness to them will make them hate you; and therefore you must be careful to avoid both extremes, and to that end keep a decent distance; but yet with demonstration of kindness, affability, and respect to them, according to their quality and condition.

For instance, in relation to your servants, if you be too familiar with them, they will quickly be your fellows; and on the other side, if you be over-imperious, insolent, and churlish to them, they will hate you, or at best will never love you, nor be very faithful to you; you must therefore take care that you carry yourselves towards them neither as your fellows nor your slaves, but with a distance, yet a decent and becoming distance, carrying with it a suitable respect to them; and

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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by this means they will both fear and love you. Never use any words or carriage, that may savour of contumely, reproach, or scorn, to the most inferior persons in the world, no, not to a beggar. If you do not give them an alms, tell them so, but give no reproachful words to the meanest person in the world.

In relation to your equals observe these directions : Be courteous and respectful to them both in words and gestures ; offer them the precedence, and take not place of an equal, unless it be earnestly pressed upon you ; for such a small trifle will procure you many friends, and will not abate any thing of your respect. It is a foolish and ridiculous thing for any man or woman to be contending or shuffling for precedence. Give it to any, rather than take it against their mind. It will not abate the value that others will have

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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of you, and among wise and discreet persons it will give you the reputation of a discreet person. In your choice of a companion, rather choose an equal than an inferior or superior. But touching this, I shall say more in the next general head.

In relation therefore to superiors. Superiors are in several kinds: as superiors in age; superiors in estates; superiors in authority, as magistrates; superiors in place, as noblemen; superiors in relation, as parents, husbands, masters: and touching your carriage to all superiors, observe these directions.

First.—Give all due respect and reverence to your superiors; as by uncovering the head, making obeisance, giving them the place and precedence, giving them leave to speak before you, not catching the words out of their mouths before they

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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have done speaking, as the fashion of some giddy people is. These, and the like demonstrations of respect, cost you nothing, and yet many times are of great advantage, and always are well taken.

Secondly.—Contend not with a superior about a trifle, but rather pass it by without taking notice of it; neither willingly upon any account go to law with them, unless it be upon a great injury, and such as your condition or estate cannot well bear; and even in such cases use all due application, either by yourself or by the mediation of others, to compose the difference; for as always lawsuits are troublesome, and hazardous, and expensive, so they are much more such, where an inferior contends with a superior in estate, place, or authority; for if you are worsted, you are in danger to be over-run by the power of the adversary, and though you prevail and

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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have the better in the suit, yet you make him an implacable enemy, that will be always watching an opportunity to be quits with you, and, one time or other, it is a thousand to one but he will do you a displeasure. Therefore let your suit at law, with a man greater or more powerful than yourself, be your last refuge, and that in case of great and extreme necessity.

Thirdly.—Never make a man that is much your superior in wealth or honour your ordinary companion, for the reasons given before in the foregoing chapter.

Fourthly.—Visit your superior at his house sometimes, to testify your respect ; but let it be very seldom, and that not at meals, but in an afternoon : for your often visits will be but troublesome ; and your visiting at meals, besides other inconveniences, will draw you into this great one, that you will draw the like inconvenience

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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upon yourself, in which if you do not equal his, it will make you ridiculous; and if it do equal his, it will be too chargeable for you to bear.

And what I say touching visits of superiors, I would have you observe as to equals; for one entertainment invites another, which if it fall out often, will be not only a perpetual trouble, but an occasion of excessive expense. If my friend come to me to eat with me uninvited, he must content himself with welcome, and what he finds; but if it once come to an invitation, the preparation must be more costly than ordinary, or it answers not expectation.

Fifthly.—And therefore never invite any great man to your house to an entertainment; for possibly his ordinary meals are as good as your feast, or better, and then you shall be laughed at for your par-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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simony ; and if you go to exceed, you shall be laughed at for your prodigality ; however your purse shall suffer beyond what it is well able to bear.

Sixthly.—Never receive any kindness from any man, either superior or equal, which you are not able to repay without great charge and detriment to yourself ; for then you are in very great danger to be made his slave or his enemy : and, many times, great kindnesses from great men are but preambles to some great kindness to be done to them, and if they are disappointed therein they become the most bitter enemies. I have oftentimes known, when extraordinary respect and favours or kindnesses are shown from great men to their inferiors, that within a little time after, a message hath been sent, or desire made to be bound for him or to sell him such a parcel of land that lies convenient

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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for him, or to do him such piece of service as is either unseemly or dangerous; and then the man that received the kindness is either so taken or mollified by the kindness received, that he must perform that which is requested; or if he be so hardy as to deny it, the great man becomes his great enemy. Therefore be wary how you receive great kindnesses from great men, lest they be attended with an expectation of such services from you, as are either unfit, or unsafe, or inconvenient to be performed by you.

Seventhly.—It is an excellent rule of Sir Francis Bacon to his son, that if there be occasion for an inferior to make a present to his superior, that it be not too costly, nor such as is in danger to be quickly forgotten; but the present to be small, and such as may have continuance and always in view, as some slight picture,

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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or a staff, or a book : but never present a judge with any thing of what kind soever ; for if he be wise and just, he will suspect your business, and reject your present as a bribe ; and if he be unjust and receive your present, you may be overcome by your adversary, and so lose your gift and your cause too : and bribery is a base offence, both in the giver and in the taker.

And thus much shall serve touching your civil deportment to your inferiors, equals, and superiors.

ADVICE OF WILLIAM, EARL  
OF BEDFORD, TO HIS SONS



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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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### ADVICE OF WILLIAM, EARL OF BEDFORD, TO HIS SONS



**I**GNORANCE and vice are the usual effects of an unlearned and undisciplined education. Of my passionate desire to free you and your brother from both these, I suppose I have given you and the world sufficient testimony, sure I am, I have satisfied myself; and you may guess how violent my longings are to advance your piety and understanding, that is, to render you perfect men, in that, death is only displeasing, when I think of dying before I see this my desire accomplished, or at least so far as my hopes may be greater than my fears: and as death every day makes his approaches nearer and nearer (God knows how soon he will

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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make a long separation between us); and in this other regard too, that whilst I live I shall always be with thee. Be this, then, received, either as a legacy for the will of a dying, or the advice of a living father, if it be observed or obeyed in either capacity, I shall think myself neither dead nor absent; I put it into your hands with a prayer, that God will give it his blessing, and then you have mine.

It was the wisest saying of the wisest man, The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Holiness then is the introduction of all wisdom; so it shall be the first of my advice, fear God, and if holiness give knowledge, knowledge will give thee happiness, long life, riches, and honour. Length of days is in the right hand of wisdom, and in her left hand are riches and honour, said the wise King: how exalted a thing, then, is religion, which is

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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the mother of so great blessings, and who will pity thy complaints for the want of any of these, if they be obtained by the pleasure of (that which will also crown thee with heaven) an holy life; be pious, and thou art all these; fear God, and thou shalt not fear man, or devil, for it will set thee above the reach of fortune, or malice.

RELIGION.—For thy religion, distinguish not thyself by, be not factious for, nor serve under any sect whatsoever; be thou a Christian, the most pure, certain, noblest worshipper of God of all others. But if thou art pressed to give up thy name to any one profession, inquire after and embrace that whose principles conduce most to piety, that which comes nearest the doctrine of Christ. And in the examination of questions in religion, though I am no divine, yet I dare venture to guide your conscience thus far. Be careful still

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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to search into the consequences of a doctrine ; rely upon the Scriptures, which are, without exposition, plain, and which, if they offer injury to the attributes of God, rendering them such as we should abhor ourselves to be, or if they open the gate to looseness and profaneness, by no means give them entertainment. Lastly, labour diligently to find the truth when God shall enable you with abilities for that great work, for I would not have you owe your religion to your education only ; and for your encouragement to the search of this truth, heedfully remember the most excellent saying of our blessed Saviour, ‘ If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or man.’ God never denied himself to him that sought him by prayer and holiness of life. And when you have thus happily found this divine truth, embrace it sincerely, and

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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follow it constantly, and be sure to give it honour by your conversation.

LOYALTY.—Next to the fear of God, the Apostle commands honour to the King, which if it be not the sum of the second table, as the other is of the first, it cannot be denied to be the principal and main pillar thereof. And let me tell thee, if thou dost honour thy father and thy mother, thou canst neither be rebel nor schismatic, disloyal to the sovereign power, or disobedient to the church.

DUTY TO PARENTS.—As for your duty to me, I doubt not but it will grow up with your understanding; and when you know how nice and curious my care hath been over your education, even to the least circumstance, my prying into your inclination, observing the bent of your soul, her very first putting forth, heightening the good, and checking the ill, placing guards

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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upon your senses and conversation, not only pointing out the way to virtue, by putting your feet into it, and teaching you to tread it (I speak not of fashioning or adorning your body, for I would not have you to measure my love and care by gay clothes, noble diet, and recreation, though you enjoyed these in some measure); when you come to know and judge of this, I have reason to expect, and therefore may boldly challenge, that if you were to choose a father, you would seek me out. Should you now so behave yourself, that as if I were to choose a son, to adopt a gentleman into my family to inherit my name and fortunes, you only I should pitch upon; besides the joy of beholding it, I should have a requital even to my wish. Nor were it possible for you to die in my debt for your education, if you observe this, with like care to bring up your chil-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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dren also, if it shall please God to give you that blessing; and because I have an ambition to oblige posterity, I do here charge this duty upon you, that you also lay the like charge upon yours, and they on their children successively. For ingenuous manners first made us noble, marked out and advanced our family first to honour; with equal reason and more facility, will such manners preserve us noble, which is most certainly effected by education, otherwise the estate I leave you will be but as rich trappings upon an ass, and render you more ridiculous: wherefore, whatsoever you leave your heirs (and now I speak to your posterity in you), be sure to give them a learned and liberal education; there being, in my judgment, no other way to secure you from falling from honour, and the despite of fortune. This which I have said con-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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cerning your duty to me, is also applicable to the memory of your excellent mother, for a personal observance you cannot pay her. I most strictly charge you often to call to mind, that you and your brother have entered into a solemn engagement unto me, under your hands, to imitate the honours and excellencies of that dear saint, the best of wives, the best of mothers and friends. Be religious in the performance of it, as you expect my blessing. Remember she had more pangs in your bringing up, than bringing forth, and she hath been an excellent nurse to your mind, regarding more the health and straitness of that, than of your body, though this were cared for with the greatest tenderness imaginable. The truth is, you owe her so much, that you cannot clear your obligation by any other way; nothing can discharge you, and acquit you to her also,

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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but by being such to yours, as she has been to you, and thus her memory is honoured, and I profess myself satisfied.

AFFECTION TO BROTHERS AND SISTERS.  
—As for your carriage towards your brothers and sisters, I must need say, that your natural kindness towards them now, gives me great hopes that you will be a loving brother hereafter. And be so, as you expect the blessing of God, and my favour. Besides, your interest will require this from you, because a numerous, wealthy, and ancient family, entire, and agreeing within itself with all its dependants and relatives, cannot easily be wronged in such a country as this. I know very well how little it can suffer, and how much it can do; but then it must be as I said, entire. The dying father's bundle of arrows in the fable, has an excellent moral, to show how invincible love and

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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union are. And that you may rightly understand me, this love of yours to them, must not only be in affectionate words, kind entertainment, and the like, but in a hearty real performance of all good offices that may tend to the advantage of their estates and reputation ; study to do them good, and stay not for opportunities offered, snatch them rather and prevent their wishes. This is a noble way of obliging, and by this means you may make them your friends, a dearer name by far than that of brother or sister, and which, perhaps, may be repaid to yours, though yourself may not need the return ; for I must tell you, kind offices have been remembered when the bestower has been rotten : and a grandchild hath been thanked, sometimes relieved, for the grandfather's kindness : insomuch as the courtesy to your brother may prove a charity to your

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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child, think seriously of this, and remember it. But that I may be thoroughly understood in this advice, your love doth not end here, and I am not fully obeyed if you only love them in that manner as I have expressed : you must endeavour that they love one another also ; to this end, be sure to put out the fire of discontent, if any appear, or but the smoke thereof, presently, so soon as it doth appear, and be careful to put it quite out, for smothered discontents break out afterwards with more violence. And herein after my decease, you are to show the authority of a father, as well as the love of a brother to your family ; for which purpose, you ought to enable yourself with those abilities of understanding and judgment, that you may be a person fit to be sought unto, and to be relied upon. This will give you authority, and upon a presumption, these both

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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sides will be inclined to rest and settle, being confident that your equal affection will not suffer you to deceive them, nor your sound reason to be deceived yourself.

AFFECTION TO KINDRED.—This advice I must carry also into my next particular that concerns your kindred, which, for the former reasons, you must also labour to preserve in amity, at least the major and better part of them, and it will require a very good skill, but once happily effected, it must needs bring you great reputation. Let your outward deportment be full of respect to all your kindred, but reserve to yourself a secret mark and character of each. And take heed of suffering them to come within you, yet thrust them not off; gentleness, but managed with discretion, will be sometimes necessary; yet distance and gravity must presently step in to secure it from presumption, and pro-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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tect it from abuse. I should say more concerning this, but I refer you to my more secret instructions, where you shall have, God enabling me, a particular of those friends and servants to your family, whose counsels you may follow, and whose service you may trust.

You are now setting your foot into the world, but before you place it, look about you, and consider that you can hardly set it but upon a snare, or a thorn, which calls upon you both for care, and courage : with these, take my experience for your guide ; and, if you follow not my directions exactly, which free you from all danger, yet tread as near as you can, you shall suffer the less ; slip you may, fall you cannot.

MANNERS.—I have observed that the greatest mischief to our manners, proceedeth from a mistake of the nature of things ; learn, therefore, first to make a right judg-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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ment of things ; esteem not a feather, and slight a jewel ; know that nothing is beautiful, great, or your own, but only virtue and piety ; riches are not great revenues, noble houses, money, or plate ; but not to want that which is necessary to support a moderate and ingenuous condition : that glory, is to be well spoken of for doing good ; honour, a reverence for being virtuous ; power and command, an ability to oblige noble persons ; nobility, heroic actions, or to be like noble ancestors : generosity, a natural inclination to virtue ; health, such a constitution of the body as renders the mind vigorous ; beauty, a fair soul lodged in no unhandsome body ; strength, not to be weary in virtuous actions ; pleasure, those pure, firm, lasting delights, which arise from those things alone which belong to the understanding and soul. All which definitions of things

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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are clean contrary to the vulgar conceptions, and, consequently, not to be expected in their practice.

Thy birth hath separated thee from the people; let thy actions also carry thee, and raise thee above them; suspect all things they admire; neither think their opinion, nor live their manners. They know not how to set upon each thing its due price and value: learn you to do it, and accustom thyself betimes to entertain right and sound opinions, that they may grow up with thee, and by using thyself to think well, thou mayest soon come to do well; and by frequency of well-doing it will, it may, at last become so habitual and natural, as that thou canst not but do well, thou canst not do otherwise; or if at any time you do ill, it may appear to be by constraint, or force, rather than from inclination. After you are able to judge

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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of things, and have kept off the servile yoke which opinion hath laid upon most men, by imposing false names, and governing the world by that cheat, and that you can plainly see a rich man to want those things which he has, and a high content in poverty, discern a great man in all his liberty, chained like a slave to his lusts and idleness, and another free in his fetters : this done, to fit you for conversation, receive these following directions. First, because the eye doth make the first report of the man, and as she tells her tale, so for the most part the presence is liked or disliked, sometimes very unjustly. To avoid prejudice, be sure to put yourself into good fashion ; and, without flattery, I may tell you, but do not hear it without thankfulness to God, you have a body every way fit to bear a graceful presence, answerable to your rank and

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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quality. But take heed of affectation and singularity, lest you act the nobleman instead of being one. And whether you stand, sit, or move, let it be with such a becoming, pleasing gravity, as that your very behaviour may commend you, and prevail for a good opinion with the beholder. Before you speak, let your mind be full of courtesy; the civility of the hat, a kind look, or a word from a person of honour, has bought that service which money could not. And he that can gain or preserve a friend, and the opinion of civility, for the moving of the hat, or a gentle look, and will not, is sillily severe; spare not to spend that which costs nothing; be liberal of them, but be not prodigal, lest they become cheap. I remember Sir Francis Bacon calls behaviour the garment of the mind; it is well resembled, and rightly expresses the behaviour I

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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would have in proportion to a garment. It must be fit, plain, and rich, useful and fashionable. I should not have advised you to such a regard of your outside, the most trifling part of man, did I not know how much the greatest part of the world is guided by it, and what notable advantages are gained thereby, even upon some very wise men; the request of an acceptable person being seldom, or at least unwillingly, denied. Yet take heed of minding your behaviour too much, lest it pilfer from your consideration, and hinder action. It is at best but a letter of commendation, or, like a master of ceremonies, presents you to have audience. If something be not well said or done, you are but a handsome picture, the pageant or show of a man.

LANGUAGE.—The next thing that fits you for conversation, and is, indeed, chiefly

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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to be laboured for, is a graceful manner of speaking in a distinct, well-tuned voice without stammering, lisping, stopping, or repetition. And let these be your rules and caution in discourse; be sparing of speech; some do it to be suspected for wise men, yet do you speak sometimes that you may not be thought a fool. But let the little you utter be very much to the purpose, and, therefore, frame it within, before you set it forth, still observing the point of your discourse, and go to that directly. If it be a knot, untie it skilfully; always have respect to a grey-haired experience, and famed understanding, if such a one be present.

Let your language be clear, proper, significant, and intelligible, fitted to the subject, which, as near as you can, should be according to the humour of the persons you converse with. And this being

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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various, it is requisite that your abilities be various also. As in all things else, so in this of speech, be a strict observer of decorum. Speak not scholastically to a lady, nor courtly to a plain man. And take heed of surfeiting the ears of your hearers, seeing that the best discourse, like sweetmeats, quickly cloy, if it become constant food; and like perpetual music, loses its charms. Therefore, still leave your company in an appetite to hear more, baiting them sometimes with short offers, so cunningly as that they may invite you, and press you to speak on: did I fear in you a poverty of speech, or should you find at any time a slender stock, I should entreat you to a good husbandry; above all things avoid commonplaces, they are fulsome and ridiculous.

If your genius leads you, and I hope it does, to affect a pleasantness of wit, this

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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will charm and win upon all companies. And let me tell you, that a story, and a fit well-chosen tale, well told, has affected that which a more serious and wise debate could never accomplish. The Spanish are singular in this kind, which renders them the best company in the world. And you have often heard me say, that it was the best music I ever heard in Spain. Their gravity in the narration sets off a story exceedingly well; imitate it if it be possible, and if you can, get the appareling the same tale in a various dress; that if you should chance to tell the same again, either it will not be known in its disguise, or it may again please, because of its variety; neither were it amiss if you sometimes seem to forget to show your dexterity that way. By no means affect scurrility, and whet not your wit on a dull adversary. It is no way generous to raise

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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mirth or triumph over a fool, whom to overcome can be no victory, when the contention itself was dishonourable. If you meet with a proud, vain, self-conceited man, it may become you well to put such a one out of countenance, so it be done handsomely, and like a person of honour, for all men are well pleased to see a vain man well rallied.

Be not dogmatical and peremptory in your opinion—it will be long before that become you; but having spoken, as you think, reason, if it be not allowed of, speak it again, and leave it calmly to censure. Be very careful of falling into passion: for why should you be angry, that another is not able or willing to understand you. Let me tell you, it is the sign of a very feeble spirit not to be able to endure contradiction; and therefore, if you have a mind to gain reputation upon any by

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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dispute, try if he can be moved: if he may be, then anger him, but without offence; you cannot wish for a greater advantage than his passion will give you; for anger, in dispute, is like an unquiet horse in a dusty way,—it raises so much dust in the eyes of the understanding, that it blinds it, and puts it out. It will lay the enraged disputant so open, that you may hit him where you please, and he cannot put by one fallacy. Besides, many have overcome by suffering the enemy to beat himself out of breath. But if you would render yourself pleasing to any person you have a mind to oblige, propose then such a subject as you know he is very skilled in, most men being desirous and pleased to show their own excellency; and you will not lose by it neither; for the experienced soldier shall tell you more of the art of war, and a well-practised

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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lawyer of a judged case in law, in half an hour, than all the books of both professions teach you in a month, if, perhaps, at all. Again, if you have a desire to make a show of yourself, to discourse of that you are best known in, take heed of rushing or breaking in upon it; it will appear pedantical, and discover an affectation which you should carefully avoid: the slight of this must be by degrees, approaches, and goings about to steal upon the argument, and draw some of the company insensibly to begin it. To shut up this particular, take notice, that some men are good at a short turn, or quick reply, who languish and are tired in a large discourse: others are nothing quick at hand, but yet their strength of reason brings them up at last. Could you join these both together, and make them one ability, you would soon appear a great master of

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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language. I could wish you had the skill to maintain paradoxes ; not to that purpose, as some cross humorous wits employ them, merely for contradiction and ostentation, but for the sharpening and stretching of your wit, which, if discreetly and modestly handled, they will afford a sharp tickling delight, set you off handsomely, and render you, to quick apprehensions, very acceptable. If to these you add modesty of countenance and speech, in one of your birth and parts they will render your conversation sweet and charming. Therefore fail not, upon occasion, to be master of a great modesty ; but withal know when to be high ; and when you show it, let it be with gentle temper, in a sweet and well-commanded spirit. So that now, you being thus fitted with comely presence, and furnished with good language, sufficiency, and dexterity of discourse :

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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EMPLOYMENT.—I will now oversee your employment, which at present is your study; and I shall be less careful herein, upon a presumption of your tutor's care and sufficiency in the kind hath prevented me; however, I shall tell you what I have heard a very learned man to speak concerning books and the true use of them.

You are to come to your study as to the table, with a sharp appetite, whereby that which you read may the better digest. He that has no stomach to his book will very hardly thrive upon it.

And because the rules of study do so exactly agree with those of the table, when you are from your tutor, take care that what you read be wholesome, and but sufficient. Not how much, but how good, is the best diet. Sometimes, for variety, and to refresh and please the palate of your understanding, you may read something

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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that is choice and delicate ; but make no meal thereon. You may be allowed also the music of poetry, so it be clear, chaste, and not effeminate.

After you have read a little, make a stand upon it, and take not more in, nor that down, till it be well chewed and examined. Go not to another thing until the first be understood in some measure. If any thing stick with you, note down your doubts in a book for the purpose, and rest not till you be satisfied, then write that down too.

In your reading, use often to invert and apply that which you observe applicable to some purpose : and if this change be a robbery, God help late writers. Sure I am, nothing to my reason appears more effectual to raise your invention and enrich your understanding.

After reading, remember, as from the

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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table, so you rise from your book, with an appetite; and being up, disturb not the concoction, which is infinitely improved by a rumination or chewing of the cud. To this end, recollection with yourself will do well, but a repetition with another far better; for thereby you will get a habit of readily expressing yourself, which is a singular advantage to learning; and by the very discoursing of what you learn, you again teach yourself: besides, something new, and of your own, must of necessity stream in.

For your choice of your books, be advised by your tutor; but, by my consent, you should not have above one or two at the most in every science, but those very choice ones. I will commend one book to you,—we begin with it when we are boys, yet it will become the oldest and gravest man's hand,—it is Tully's Offices;

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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a most wise and useful book, where you shall have excellent philosophy excellently dressed. And those that are skilful in the language say, that the whole Latin tongue is there with all its purity and propriety.

For the more orderly managing of your study, I would have you divide the day into several employments. Great and wise persons have given you the example. If you will have me dispose your time for you, I shall proportion it into three octaves : eight hours of which for sleep, comprehending dressing and undressing ; eight hours for devotion, food and recreation, in which I comprehend visits and your attendance upon me ; the other octave, give it constantly to your studies, unless business or like accident interrupt, which, if it shall, you must either recompense by the succeeding day's diligence,

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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or borrow from your recreation. But by no means entrench upon your hours of devotion, which I would have you proportion into little and frequent offices, to sweeten the spirits and prevent wearisomeness. Possibly even these hours also of devotion may sometimes receive interruption by travel or employment of necessity ; then your offices must be the less. You may likewise be deprived of the conveniency of place : if so, yet steal a retirement—nothing must hinder you from withdrawing yourself, and a good man makes any place an oratory. But be sure no merry-meeting, pastime, or humouring of others, make a breach upon your daily exercise of piety—nothing but evident necessity can dispense.

Be not ashamed to ask if you doubt ; but be ashamed to be reproved for the same fault twice.

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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Be constant in your course of study; and although you proceed slowly, yet go on in your path; assiduity will make amends at last. He that can but creep, if he keeps his way, will sooner come to his journey's end, than he that rides post out of it.

Endeavour at the highest perfection, not only at your studies, but in whatsoever you attempt: strive to excel in everything, and you may perform many things worthy of praise, nothing meanly. He that aims further than he can shoot, and draws with his utmost strength, will hardly shoot short, at least deserves not to be blamed for short shooting.

Avoid night studies, if you will preserve your wit and health.

Whether thou dost read or hear any thing—indeed whatsoever you do—intend what thou art about, and let not thy mind

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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wander, but compel it to be fixed and present. If any other thought comes across thee in thy study, keep it off, and refer it to some other time: this wandering of your spirit you know I have often reproved, therefore, whatsoever you do, do it, and nothing else.

Suffer not thy memory to rest; she loves exercise, and grows with it; every day commend something notable to her custody; the more she receives, the better she keeps; and when you have trusted any thing to her care, let it rest with her awhile, then call for it again, especially if it be a fault corrected. You must not err twice; and by this frequent calling her to account, she will be always ready to give you satisfaction; and the sooner, if what she was entrusted with was laid up orderly, and put, as it were, in the several boxes of a cabinet.

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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If thou wouldst seem learned, the best way is to endeavour to be learned; for if thou dost not strive to be that which thou desirest to be, thou desirest to no purpose, which gives me occasion to recommend this following advice to your especial regard.

It is an extreme vanity to hope to be a scholar, and yet to be unwilling to take pains: for what excellent thing is there that is easily composed? Its very difficulty doth imply, and, as it were, doth invite us to something worthy and rare. Consider it is a rose that thorns do compass; and the forbidden object sharpens the desire in all other things. Thus a difficult mistress makes a lover more passionate; and that same man hates an offered and a prostitute love. I dare say, if learning were easy and cheap, thou wouldst as much slight her; and, indeed,

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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who would have any thing common with a carter or a cobbler? Something there is, doubtless, in it, that none but noble and unwearied spirits can attain her; and these are raised higher, and heightened by its difficulty, and would not gain her otherwise. Something there is in it, that no money or jewels can buy her. No, nothing can purchase learning but thy own sweat: obtain her, if thou canst, any other way. Not all my estate can buy thee the faculty of making but one quick epigram—the trifling part of her; wherefore I entreat thee, to raise thy spirit, and stretch thy resolution. And so often as thou goest to thy book, place before thy eyes what crowns, sceptres, mitres, and other ensigns of honour, learning hath conferred upon those that have courted her with labour and diligence; besides the rare pleasure of satisfaction, which, of itself, is

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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an honourable reward. And let me tell thee, a learned holy man (and such a one would I fain have thee to be) looks like an angel in flesh—a mortal cherubim. And because letters are great discoverers of the man, therefore, when you write, let your style be genteel, clean, round, even, and plain, unless the subject or matter require a more manly and vigorous expression. I cannot allow you a curiosity, unless it be like a lady's dress, negligently neat. Go not to counsel for every word, yet neglect not to choose. Be more careful to think before you write than before you speak ; because letters pass not away as words do ; they remain upon record, are still under the examination of the eye, and tortured they are, sometimes, to confess that of which they were never guilty. That is rare, indeed, that can endure reading. Understand the person well to whom

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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you write. If he be your inferior or equal, you may give your pen the more liberty, and play with it sometimes ; but if to your superior, then regard is to be had to your interest with him, his leisure, and capacity ; all which will be so many caveats, and instructions to the humility, neatness, and brevity of your style. You shall do well if, like a skilful painter, you draw your sense, and the proportions of your business, in a plain draft first, and then give it colour, heightening, and beauty afterwards ; and, if it be duly considered, it is no such great commendation to be praised for penning a letter without making a blot, not in my judgment : therefore, after you have pondered and penned, then examine and correct. A negligent manner of writing, methinks, is a kind of an affront and a challenge, not a letter, to a person of distinction. Avoid all rough-

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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ness, swelling, poverty, and looseness in your style; let it be rather riotous than niggardly. The flowing pen may be helped, but the dry never. Especially shun obscurity, because it must go a-begging for an interpreter: and why should you write to entreat him to understand you if he can. Be this your general rule, both in your writing and speaking,—labour for sense, rather than words; and for your book, take this also, study men and things.

Perhaps you will expect, after all these instructions, I should commend unto you some copy or example to imitate. As for the Greek and Latin tongues, I leave it to your tutor's choice. In the English, I know no style I should sooner prefer to your imitation, than that of Sir Francis Bacon, that excellent unhappy man. And to give you direction for all imitation in

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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general, as well as of his style in particular, be careful so to imitate, as, by drawing forth the very spirits of the writer, you may, if possible, become himself. Imitate him, but do not mock him ; for the face of a bull, or a horse, is more comely, than that of an ape or a monkey, though the ape most resembles man, the most beautiful of all creatures : and, in that regard, your own genuine and natural style may show more comely than an imitation of Sir Francis Bacon, if it be not exactly done. I would have the imitator be as the son of the father, not the ape of a man ; that is, to put on the likeness of a child, not of an ape : for the ape only imitates the deformities and the ridiculous actions of man, the son represents all the graces of the face, gesture, and every figure of his father ; and, in this representation, he hath something of himself

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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too. I shall add but one caution more, and that is this—as he can never run well who shall resolve to set his foot in the footsteps of one that went before, so neither shall any man write well, who precisely and superstitiously ties himself to another's words. And with this liberty I wish you still happy.

And such will all your studies be, if you constantly put in practice this my last admonition, which I reserved purposely for this place. It is, that you be careful every night, before you go to bed, to perform your devotions, to withdraw yourself into your closet, or some private part of your chamber, and there call memory, your steward, to account what she has heard or read that day worthy of observation; what she hath laid up, what she spent; how the stock of knowledge improves, where and how she decays. A

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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notable advantage will this bring to your studies at present, and hereafter, if that way employed, to your estate. But if this course be strictly observed each night between God and your soul, there will the true advantage appear. Fail not, therefore, what employment soever you have, every night, as in the presence of God and his holy angels, to pass an inquisition on your soul what ill it hath done, what good it hath left undone; what slips, what falls it hath had that day; what temptation hath prevailed upon it; and by what means, or after what manner. Ransack every corner of thy dark heart, and let not the least peccadillo, or kindness to a sin, lurk there, but bring it forth, bewail it, protest against it, detest it, and scourge it by a severe sorrow. Thus each day's breach between God and your soul being made up, with more quiet and sweet hope thou mayest

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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dispose thyself to rest. Certainly, at last, this inquisition, if steadily pursued, will vanquish all customary sins, whatever they be. I speak it upon this reason, because I presume thou wilt not have the face to appear before God every night confessing the same offence; and thou wilt forbear it, lest thou mayest seem to mock God, or despise him, which is dreadful but to imagine. This finished, for a delightful close to the whole business of the day, cause your servant to read something that is excellently written or done, to lay you to sleep with it, that, if it may be, even your dreams may be profitable or learned. This you will find, by your own experience, true, that things will appear more naked to the eye of the soul, when the eye of the body is shut; which, together with the quiet of the night, that time is rendered a most fit season for contemplation and

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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contrivance. As a great advantage, not only to your book, but health and business also, I cannot but advise and enjoin you to accustom yourself to rise early; for, take it from me, no lover of his bed did ever yet form great and noble things. Now, though I allowed eight hours for your bed, with the preparation to it and from it, yet this was rather to point out the utmost limits beyond which you should not go, rather than to oblige you to observe such a proportion exactly. Borrow, therefore, of these golden morning flowers, and bestow them on your book. A noble person, of all others, has need of learning, and therefore should contribute most time to it; for, besides that it gilds his honour, and sets off his birth, it becomes his employment, which a nobleman, of all others, must not want, if he will secure his soul, honour, and estate, all which are in most

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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certain danger from idleness, the rock of nobility, considering the plenty of his table, and society, with all sorts of temptation; if, therefore, he be a hard student, he is not at leisure to be vicious; the devil knows it is to no purpose to tempt a busy man; be always, therefore, employed; and because some are triflingly active, that you may not with them be idly busy, your book will instruct you how. Did you but hear the complaints of excellent personages, for missing of that opportunity which you are now master of; or could you but suppose yourself old and ignorant, how tender would you be of the loss of one minute, what would you not give to return to these years you now enjoy? Let this consideration sink deep and settle in you. Be more curious of the expense of your time than of your gold: time being a jewel whose worth is invaluable, whose loss is

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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irreparable ; therefore secure the present time, that you may not hereafter lose more by a vain bewailing of the past. Now, because the best of learning is to study yourself, and I have reason to believe I have some skill in you, having so curiously observed your nature and inclination, I shall make some useful discourse in order to this knowledge, by which you may both see your defects and amend them.

YOURSELF.—The most profitable and necessary knowledge in the world is to know and study thyself ; wherefore, with all the plainness, sincerity, and observation you can make in your best temper of mind and body, lay yourself open to yourself ; take an impartial survey of all your abilities and weaknesses, and spare not to expose them to your eye by writing, which I conceive is the best done by framing your own character, and so to draw the picture

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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of your mind, which I recommend to your yearly practice during your life. This, if you flatter not yourself, will be your best looking-glass, and must needs have a singular influence upon your religion, and serve your soul extremely well to very high purposes; for, by this means, your growth or decay in virtue will be discovered, and, consequently, ways for the increase of that growth, or for repairing those decays and breaches in the soul, will more readily be found out, and more easily cured. When you have found both your forces and infirmities, then look with one eye upon them, and with the other on the realms you live in, whereby, comparing yourself with the general state of affairs, you shall soon discern whether there may be a correspondency and compliance between you and them, that you may thereupon either draw yourself within your

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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private walls, to enjoy the happiness of an holy, quiet, and innocent repose, in case the times are rough and dangerous to sail in ; or else, if calm and suitable, to engage yourself in some public employment, for the service of your country and advancement of your family : though, if I may guess at the future constitution of your mind by what I observe at present, were the times never so calm and inviting, you should not be easily enticed to embark yourself into the world or engage in busy and great employments. Your best course, in my judgment, were to say your prayers at home, manage your little affairs innocently and discreetly, and enjoy, with thankfulness, what God has bestowed upon me. But it may so happen that your inclinations may be active, and your parts correspondent, and that good fortune may find you out in your privacy, and

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## PRACTICAL WISDOM

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court you to employment,—if she does, refuse her not, but embrace her with these cautions : First, be sure to ballast yourself well, by calling in to your aid all the advantages of learning, art and experience ; then consider to fit your sails to the bulk of your vessel, lest you prove a slug, or overset. And because commonwealths have their shelves and rocks, therefore get the skill of coasting and shifting your sails : I mean, to arrive at your journey's end by compassing and an honest compliance. Yet, if honesty be the star you sail by, doubt not of a good voyage, at least be sure of a good harbour.













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